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# SILENCE

A COMPOUND PROBLEM NOVEL

BY

STEWART, *friend.*

*Jean L. De Esque.*



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CONNOISSEUR'S PRESS

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Respectfully dedicated to two  
fighting editors, sons of Liberty,  
D. C. O'MALLY and Wm. R. HEARST



**Dramatized**



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## PREFACE

This is a warning to you who read this book not to hand it to your children or to the young folks. A man under the age of twenty-five, and a woman under twenty-three, if unmarried, has no business perusing the contents of this volume, for neither possess the eruditeness of impartial deduction nor the forming of a logical hypothesis relative to the diversified ethics laid bare in this compilation of facts when under the above specified ages; neither is capable of reading the succeeding pages and derive therefrom a moral lesson. Instead, thoughts derogatory to Virtue would rise up in their hearts and create an unrest that bald experience alone could sate.

The following pages are taken from facts, irrefragable ones, and blended into readable form by an eye-witness and an actor. Truth is not hampered by polite sayings; vice is not gilded by conventional phraseology, and Sex, that eternal perplexing question, is handled with steel prongs instead of the habitual silk mitten.

A storm of protest will arise from certain cities and sweep this country from north to south; con-



fiscation of this book and countless libel suits would not surprise me in the least; and, should such come to pass, I pledge every dollar that I possess in a gigantic battle to rid from the Face of Respectability certain quarters of obscene characters so far basking in the shrine of Immunity, secure behind the portals of glaring Sin that spreads its contaminating filth from coast to coast.

In a recent magazine article a writer made an attempt to air the salaciousness of a scoundrel vile as hell, yet failed to raise a storm of righteous indignation from the rank and file of our loyal Americans because he failed to strike at the fundamental root of this cankering evil. I have dug into the very vitals of this cancer, and, if plain common English fails to rouse our sons and daughters of Liberty to the damnable traffic carried on in New York, Chicago and New Orleans, then God help this Country and its destiny.

I have not written this book with the object that it serve as a means to pass an idle hour or two; I have not compiled the succeeding facts so girls and boys in their teens may "steal one mad hour," as a certain writer put it relative to a recent fast seller, with the object of warping their all too plastic minds by gleaning an incorrect rendering of the exploitation of certain scenes and



incidents hereinafter set forth, so shocking to this twentieth century's civilization.

Unimaginable crimes are taking place beneath our very eyes and those of the Law, crimes that vie in horror with those of ancient Sodoma and Gomorrah.

Marriage, the concrete cause of so many evils, is not wrong in its basic principle, only inasmuch as it bears a relationship to Divorce, a preponderating evil that appears to be growing to monumental proportions from year to year. Keep the young men away from the houses of ill-fame; exercise a little more Spartan authority when dealing with the future mothers of the generations to come; banish by exile every godless siren who feasts upon the spoils of Flesh; regulate the acquaintances of your sons and daughters; see to it that they eschew the Blaney blood-and-thunder shows, and you will be fighting for the resurrection of old Morality and Virtue, twins who saw defeat under the avalanche of pampered corruption, and prated as principles out o' date by American constituents of Codfish Aristocracy.

I spare no one. An ace is called an ace and a spade a spade. I carry to this day a hard knot on the back of my head as a gentle memento of a prolonged investigation into the conditions prevalent in a certain city's shielded district, the same as a



certain character mentioned in a certain chapter of this book carries a ball of lead in one of his legs for exposing a number of unsavory episodes in the life of a man who should have been cracking stones in a penitentiary instead of warming the seat of the office he now holds.

Since delving into certain phases hereinafter elucidated, I have come to the conclusion that the dispensers of Justice are affected with a bad attack of nearsightedness, and that some generous son of Liberty ought to present them with a pair of magnifying spectacles. If this hypothesis is erroneous, why then do our Judges fail to see the daily encroachment of Corporate Graft? Why is it that a pampered sybarite swears off nine-tenths of his personal tax under the two-faced Non-Resident law? I have in mind the case of a man rated by Bradstreet and Dun as a millionaire eighty-five times over, who pays a personal tax on but \$200,000. Why are the \$84,800,000 not taxed? Why enforce the law to its fullest extent on the poor and middle classes and lick the paws of Plutocrats and predatory Wealth, like a dog its master's hand?

Once again I ask my readers to see to it that the young folks do not read this book, that they will pardon the scathing expletives hurled against certain offenders who profit by the traffic of transcon-



tinental vice; and, with the hope that the true American residents of a certain city will bear me no ill-will on account of what is laid bare in the following chapters, I beg to remain,

Most faithfully yours,

STEWART,  
MCMVIII.







## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCING FRIENDS.

To begin with, my name is Everett Bangs, and, being the narrator, I believe that it is not amiss to state that I was the unconscious cause of the coming denouements enacted by my friends and hereinafter set forth in cold type with Imagination relegated to the rear and facts mounted on the irrefragable pedestal of Truth incontrovertible to scathing invectives and jaundiced expostulations of those who may condemn it to the contrary notwithstanding.

I say without peradventure that Cyrus Scencio, my college chum and bosom friend, was, and, for that matter, is to-day as moral and conscientious a Christian as ever graced human society when segregated from the baneful and hypnotic influence of her, known to the actors of this drama and introduced to the reader, as "Silence."

Have you felt the effects of the opalescent gleam of a cat's scintillating disks in the pall of a noc-



turnal night when the moon is blanketed in a shroud of Opaque's blackest hue and stars are submerged in an angry heaven's crepe, or have you experienced the chilling sensations evoked by the phosphorescent exhalation of a bog, just when the sun is lost to view on its westward journey to the land of Vishnu and Siva, and you are caught in the solitary stillness of a primeval swamp, where owls and wolfs come forth to make the night a reign of terror with their strident howls and reverberating cries? If so, then you have but a faint conception of the eerie sensations that suck the vitals from one's heart and soul when caught by the spell of "Silence's" midnight orbs that pierce one to the very bone; but of her anon.

Cyrus Scencio was an Italian of noble lineage, brought to this country at the tender age of four when the elder Scencio was consul at New Orleans, La. In one of the spastic epidemics of yellow-fever the parents of Cyrus died. However, this is no startling intelligence to those unfortunate sons of Liberty who have felt the Wanderlust and visited the dirty, inhospitable shores of New Orleans, a town where disease is as rampant as the cholera in India, and where the gutters of streets literally knock one down with their ascending nauseating smells or putrid vapors. Of its world-famed Mardi Gras, when sybaritic lewdness runs unchecked and



prostitutes in skin-tight costumes mingle with those of probity and of virtue, I will treat in its proper place when the action of this story leaps from New York to this most unconventional, un-American and unc cosmopolitan town in these United States.

The Mountains of Tennessee are noted for the manufacture of illicit whiskey; 'tis also a safe retreat from the voracious jaws of "Yellow Jack," whither the black Mammy who was the nurse of Cyrus took her charge, remaining there on a large farm until the lad was ripe for school.

An uncle having a large importing and exporting business in New York was appointed guardian over Cyrus, so to New York he went with his faithful Mammy, attending the public school, then the high school, and finally entering college at the age of seventeen, where he and I became the best of friends.

Being somewhat of an esthetic temperament, and inclining toward the higher arts, he added painting, sculpture and music to his curriculum, and made such headway in the first named that he attracted the attention of several art critics in New York.

The second year of our scholastic career there enrolled in the junior class a fine athletic lad, Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., who at once took a violent liking to young Cyrus, and an equally violent dis-



like to me for reasons unknown to me even at this late date.

Cassaway's father was immensely wealthy, controlled a great Metropolitan Daily, for whose chief post his only son and heir was being educated, with the view of at some future date editing this giant periodical that catered to America's great middle class.

I myself am poor as the proverbial "church mouse," my father having died when I was but a babe in swaddling-clothes. Fortunately though he had left ten thousand dollars in the way of life insurance to my mother, which, safely invested, meted out a mediocre existence for us two, and enabled me to secure an academic education; also, incidentally mixing me up in the net of a great New York scandal in high life.

Our "Apollo" (so the boys labeled Cyrus on account of his dark beauty) grew very chummy with the interloper—Wilburt Cassaway. In fact, after our matriculation he purposely slighted me with gross negligence and without just cause, notwithstanding the fact that we had bachelor apartments together.

Choosing the Law as my profession I made several very advantageous acquaintances in the higher walks of life, and failed not to leave each additional acquisition of influence and affluence to be



of a paramount help to my struggling artist chum and brother.

Singers have a hard time in securing recognition; sculptures, too, appear to have their full quota of "hard luck"; but, readers, for downright unappreciativeness consign me to the painters and authors. Unless you have a name—capital "N," please—attached to your cognomen, you stand as much show of securing a hearing or even receiving a word of encouragement as old Nick has in conquering the impregnable walls of Paradise. Looking back to the struggling days of Cyrus the thought occurs to me that no world-renowned painter or writer is born with the handles that now adorn their names. And yet, purveyors of works of art and publishers alike treat with contempt a rising aspirant to one of the solitary niches in the "Hall of Fame," a temple dedicated to Genius, and yet, strangely, for some unexplained reason, waging an eternal antithesis against poor Edgar Allen Poe and crowning as immortal one Jonathan Edwards who assayed to scale the lofty heights of Posy's sublimest apex, and lost himself in the lower wicks of old Manhattan Island.

Love must precede marriage the same as an introduction must forego the reciprocal stage of avowed affection; all of which happened in a logical order and sequence with Wilburt Cassaway,



Jr., and Cyrus Scencio, with the narrator so far excepted.

It was at a ball given by one of the members of Society's younger set with whom Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., was, according to *patriis virtutibus*, one of the elect, that Cyrus Scencio met the woman who became his wife. Unlike most Southern women, Janice la Trube was a blonde, of mediocre height, of charming personality; and had but lately returned from Milan where she had studied music with her friend, Florence Esty, who was destined to become Mrs. Wilburt Cassaway, Jr.

I remember most poignantly that fateful ball, fateful for many reasons, as the reader will see in the succeeding chapters. It was in May; the night was burdened with the heavy perfume of budding trees; the sky was like a crystal lake of onyx water; the stars set in the alabaster dome of Heaven, diamonds that whispered Love's sacred tale to the distant moon in a lake of blue; and, as I sat with my cigar on a bench beneath a majestic oak, I heard the bell-like laughter of my friend Cyrus, and the silver voice of his companion across the gravel path from me, whilst in the distance, off from the spouting fountain, floated the murmuring echo of a love-sick couple whom I knew to be Wilburt and Miss Esty.

What vows were made that night beneath the



Prussian blanket of the eternal skies I know not. Suffice to say that when I returned, having first dined at a downtown restaurant, I met Cyrus awaiting me with much show of impatience.

"I did a strange thing to-night, Et' " (he always called me so for short).

"Strange perhaps, Cyrus, but nothing of which you are ashamed, old boy?" I asked.

"No," blushing like a schoolboy to the roots of his black hair, "no. I was not alone, for with me was the Great Spirit, the angels and the stars."

In consternation I stared at him for fully a minute. And yet I should not have been surprised, for artists say queer things, think unconventional things, with their highstrung temperament always in the ascendency.

"Look here, Et', how about that canvas I commissioned you to sell?"

"Over at your desk is the check."

"Then you disposed of it?"

"Yes. For \$420."

"Not a munificent sum for the 'Eclipse,' eh, Et', especially when I devoted four long months to it?"

"No."

"Thanks for your help, though. It comes in handy now," and he blushed again as he filled his pipe and made himself easy in a large Turkish chair. "I may be an unmitigated fool, and I may



be a disguised Socrates," and he laughed heartily, until his chiseled face was wet with tears.

"What is it that has placed your spirits in this undefinable mood?"

"Sist!" and he held up his immaculate finger. "Softly, Et'."

"Well?" I whispered, feeling as if the next announcement would be a confession of murder.

"I'm engaged to be married," whereupon he hid his face in a dense cloud of smoke.

"Married!" I shouted, as I leaped to my feet.

"And do you not like the idea?"

"Good Lord!" I groaned, as I stared the man in the face who was about to wreck his genius on the altar of Love.

"I think that an artist should have a helpmate to——"

"Fiddlesticks!" I cut in. "What business has an artist with a wife, answer me? About as much as a dog has with a diamond tiara."

"Not so hasty, Et'."

"Look here, Cyrus. What do you know of the gentler sex?"

"Know?" and he laughed heartily. "Oh, Heavens! Have I not painted enough of them to know what they're made of?"

"You're a simpleton! Yes, you have painted quite a few, but that is all, all sir."



"Do you not think that I made a minute study of their character, disposition and mental qualities?"

"Perhaps."

"And do you not believe that I am able to discern the sterling qualities of a noble woman when I meet her?"

"Have you met her?"

"I certainly have."

"Were you introduced to her?"

"Most assuredly."

"By whom?"

"Wilburt Cassaway."

"May I ask the young lady's name?"

"By all means. Janice la Trube, from New Orleans, please."

"Had you met the young lady previous to the ball?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Because if you have but just been introduced, and you already announce yourself engaged, I am compelled to believe that you are a fit subject for Bellevue's insane ward."

"Then you do not believe in love at first sight?"

"Decidedly no. A man does not understand a woman thoroughly after ten years of married life; how then can a couple at first acquaintance reconcile themselves to the belief that they are suitably mated?"



"I cannot argue this question. Let others who delight in solving perplexing ramifications devote their energies to its logical deduction whilst you and I take up the subject of my approaching marriage."

"And when is it to be solemnized?"

"The third Wednesday in June."

"I am going to have a Lunacy Commission to examine you as to your sanity."

"Thanks! The wedding is to take place at the bride's residence and you are to be my best man."

Resignedly I concurred to his fool proposition, and was mentally prognosticating the ultimate outcome of this marriage in haste when the hall-boy announced Wilburt Cassaway, Jr.

"Ye gods! Who would have thought it possible!" and Cyrus leaned his head back and shouted with glee at the nonplused Wilburt.

"What kind of a greeting do you call this, idiot?" shaking his friend by the shoulder.

"When's the nuptial-knot to be tied?"

"Confound you!" floundering in the nearest chair, "who in the name of all that's holy——"

"Oh come, Wilburt, confess that you are to launch your matrimonial craft in the very near future, and that yours truly is to be your best man."

"Well, I'll be hanged!"



"Do so by all means," with a sly wink at me.

"As a rule my plans are laid in silence, yet for the nonce I appear to have bungled."

"Not so, friend. I simply surmised the truth. I am sorry though that I cannot accommodate you by serving in the delightful capacity of best man, for I myself am to be married the third Wednesday in June."

"The devil you say!" his eyes growing large with surprise and bewilderment.

"Yes. And Et' here has consented to act as my best man. When is your wedding scheduled to take effect?"

"June the twenty-eighth."

"Why not have it on the same day as mine? What a capital idea! A double marriage in the Little Church around the corner, great!"

"I dare you to say this in real earnest."

"But I do say so."

"Then I'll take you up."

"Look here, boys, this is all a joke, and must not be," I interposed. "Do use a little common sense in a matter of such monumental importance."

"If Mr. Scencio," with a flashing look at me, "is willing to be spliced on the same day and place with his friend, then I fail to see where such a procedure would interfere with your humdrum ex-



istence, save a necessary rupture in your Bohemian mode of living."

What was I to do with such unmitigated imbeciles? Then and there the two hypnotized swains perfected their idiotic designs, appointed the hour, church, minister, etc., etc., mapped out an itinerary where they proposed to spend their joint honeymoon, and made the night merry with college yarns and songs.

True to their words, the double marriage occurred on the third Wednesday in June; and, after an elaborate dinner, served at one of New York's famous restaurants, the two couples left for parts unknown.

Seated in my office at about 4 P. M. and enjoying the fine write-up of my friends' marriage in an evening paper antagonistic to the editorial principles of Wilburt Cassaway's sheet, I was roused from my easy chair by the appearance of the elder Cassaway. His face was abnormally red, his eyes were dancing mad with fire, his entire mien spoke simon-pure anger.

"Have you seen the news?" flashing his enemy's sheet before me.

"I have."

"Do you believe it?"

"I certainly do, for I myself was best man for Cyrus Scencio."



"Thunder and blazes!" and he relieved himself of a fearful oath as he hastened from my office, took the elevator and disappeared from view.

Just why he had been ignored relative to his son's marriage was a conundrum to me, and gave me food for thought during the entire absence of the honeymooners. Parental opposition may have had something to do with it. His own paper had had no notice of his son's wedding to the charming Miss Esty, a new and favorite debutante of Society's chosen few.

But there came a time when Wilburt Cassaway, Sr., fought valiantly, incessantly and courageously for the name and honor of his son's wife, fought giant battles against Blind Passion and the sting of secret Incest, for the salvation of his son, for the respect that had been his until this shadow crossed his aging life.



## CHAPTER II.

### WHEN I WAS DUPED.

It was late in August that a mysterious woman invaded the rooms across the street from the apartment house where lived, to all intents and purposes, as happy two couples as ever sipped the honey of reciprocal love from the font of connubial bliss.

Cassaway and Scencio returned together, leased the apartments above mentioned, and through Cyrus' insistency I reluctantly consented to take the bachelor quarters on the third floor directly above his suite. A large, spacious hall separated the suites of the two couples.

There was enacted an ugly scene between Wilburt and his irate sire, ending in the old gentleman disinheriting the young man and, strangely, engaging Cyrus on a salary of \$6,000 a year to take charge of his paper's art department.

Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., was not a millionaire by any means, though his tastes were of the most sybaritic. From an estate willed him by his mother



he had about \$65,000, besides owning one hundred thousand acres of rich pine lands in the states of North and South Carolina, purchased by him soon after his advent into the head editorial chair of his father's giant paper. And as was but natural, the wives of these two men became the best of friends and continued as such until the *Woman in Purple* across the street loomed large on the ascending horizon of their domestic hearths.

Being a bachelor, and having no dinner awaiting me at home, I dined first at one restaurant and then at another as *Dame Fancy* prompted.

This August day of which I speak was unusually hot; and, I was just in the act of closing my desk when the lad, who was my clerk and general factotum, announced in treble voice that a most beautiful lady wished to see Mr. Bangs.

We all have a certain streak of curiosity in our makeup, and I confess without shame that I have my full quota, whether abnormal or not I leave for others to decide.

Even now I blush to my very ears when I bethink myself of the following puerile actions that took place in my office immediately after the lad's announcement. In the rear of my private sanctum was a small closet furnished with a washstand, towel-rack and the necessary paraphernalia usually found in a well-appointed office building. And



thither I hastened to array my hair as becomingly as possible, retied my cravat several half dozen times, brushed my clothes, trimmed my fingernails as though I were scheduled to meet the queen of Andalusia. The woman was awaiting my appearance, and such a woman! I fairly gasped in astonished admiration.

"Mr. Everett Bangs, I presume?" extending her jeweled hand.

"At your disposal, madam," I heard myself articulate.

"Miss," she corrected with a seductive smile that won approval from me then and there, a smile that stole into my heart and bound me slave to her future whims and fancies.

"I am come to see you pertaining to a most vital subject, that of robbery."

"Robbery!" I echoed, though why I did so I cannot divine.

"Yes. A pearl necklace worth \$46,000 was stolen from my jewel-box last night between the hours of 9 and 12 P. M.

"But I am not a detective, Miss."

"Am I not aware of the fact?"

"My name is Bangs, Everett Bangs; and yours?"

"Silence."

Here's a mystery, thought I, as I quieted my throbbing nerves and sat perfectly still for at least



a full minute. And, hearing nothing unusual I rose from my seat, opened the door and surveyed the hall. It was deserted. And, only after closing and locking the door did I perceive that my strange visitor was engaged in a vain endeavor to stifle each ascending cachinnation.

“What made you say silence?”

“Did you not ask me my name?”

“I did so.”

“What retainer do you demand for undertaking the recovery of my stolen necklace?”

“Its recovery is out of my jurisdiction. The police department attend to such matters.”

“Police!” and she surveyed me with drooping eyelashes that shaded eyes of a—to me—non-descript color.

“Yes.”

“When I wish a policeman I call him, when I have work for a lawyer I consult him. The case which I mentioned is for the unraveling of an astute lawyer, and not a bungling policeman.”

“Thanks for the compliment.”

“Keep the change.”

This vernacular expression roused my thoughts to flights of speculation and conjecture. Was she an actress? It is most probable, also possible that such was her avocation, else where had she learned this little harmless though vulgar expression?



"Will two per cent of the value of the pearls be a sufficient stipend to induce you to take hold of my case?"

"Heavens! not that much. If you really insist I will take the case for \$200."

"Here's the money," and she handed me four crisp fifty dollar notes.

"State now the full particulars so I may make a memorandum of them for future reference," said I, as I extracted my fountain pen and a small notebook from my vest pocket.

"It was this morning, to be concise, about 2.15 A. M. that I missed the pearls, having but just returned from a dinner."

"How long have you lived at your present address?"

"Three weeks," smiling most captivatingly.

"Have you any servants?"

"Yes, three in number. A maid, a cook and a coachman. But it is useless to suspect any of these."

"Whom do you suspect?"

"A dark-looking gentleman, very good looking, long black mustache, about six feet tall, and straight as an arrow," and she eyed me searchingly, though I will swear that for the moment I was nonplused.

Great beads of perspiration stood like sentinels



upon my wildly throbbing brow, my hands trembled spasmodically, my eyes seemed to be peering into an impenetrable haze as my mind labored in the blanket of chaos, doubt and fear; for her description, great heavens! it tallied with that of my bosom friend, Cyrus Scencio.

"Have you the description, Mr. Bangs?"

"I have," I managed to force my lips to mutter.

"This imposing gentleman I saw with my own eyes just as I stepped from the elevator. He had a very small package under his arm, and appeared in a desperate hurry. My door had been locked, yet when I first saw this man he seemed to me to have just come from my room. I was dreadfully frightened, but only for a moment. In passing down the corridor the man had to pass a brilliant cluster of electric lights fastened in the ceiling overhead, and whilst doing so I was given a good view of his face, about the handsomest one that I have seen in this country."

"Was that the last you saw of him?"

"No."

"Have you seen this man since?"

"Yes."

"When and where?"

I held to the chair with grim determination not to reveal my emotions as she spoke.

"This morning I was seated at one of my parlor



windows when the handsome Adonis who hypothesized my pearls made his reappearance. Right across the street, at No. 17, I saw him. He stood on the stoop for a moment, waved his hat to a young woman and disappeared around the corner."

"Are you morally certain of your identification? Unlooked-for trouble will be yours if you should be so unfortunate as to err in your hypothesis."

"I am not mistaken."

"Do you know the man's name?"

"I do."

"And how did you ascertain it?"

"By sending Philip, my coachman, to inquire."

"What is his name?"

"Cyrus Scencio, an artist, and but lately married."

"Have you consulted any one else relative to the loss of your pearls?"

"I have not."

"How long has he lived at No. 17?"

I was asking unnecessary questions for the sole reason of allowing my mind a chance to recuperate from the sudden shock that it had received in this strange woman's bold assertion that dear old Cyrus was a thief and robber.

"I do not know, nor do I care. I want a warrant sworn out for his immediate arrest, also a search warrant so that my jewels may be recovered, and,"



rising, "I expect you to act at once," and before I could recover my shattered wits the woman had left.

Seething with conflicting emotions I sat in my chair and tried to reason the thing out to a logical hypothesis, but to no avail.

"Great heavens!" I suddenly shouted, as I leaped to my feet. "What's the woman's name?" Had I at first been so completely fascinated by the woman's beauty that I forgot to ask her name, and had the stunning blow of her averment blighted my otherwise receptive thinking apparatus into a state of personified lunacy? What was I to do? The man accused was my best friend.

In a whirlwind of conflicting emotions I left my office, and soon found myself at a police precinct station, though how I got there seems a mystery to me, even after a lapse of several years. I remember applying for the warrants in my name as legal adviser for *Woman in Purple*, also that I gave them to two officers to be served. Whether I dined at a restaurant I do not recollect. The old Bartholdi Hotel had been our rendezvous for years, and thither I wended my weary steps, wrote a small note addressed to "*Woman in Purple*," at No. 16 ——— Street, dispatched it by a messenger, ordered a room and went to sleep.

It was about nine-thirty the following morning



that I presented myself at the Criminal Court Building, where I engaged a very talented lawyer to defend my friend's forthcoming trial for robbery. And there, in her most bewitching purple dress and beaming with smiles that would have put the stars to shame, was my friend's accuser.

Cyrus was black with wrath, his wife and Wilburt's were weeping, all unaware of the identity of the woman who was the fundamental cause of this unlooked-for catastrophe.

I noted, too, the peculiar expression on the woman's face as she fixed her penetrating eyes upon the flushed face of Cyrus. To describe it is beyond me. But it was not that of animosity, neither that of triumph, the kind that one would expect to see when we have in the toils of the Law a person who has caused us pain or sorrow. I have seen a great Nubian lioness lick her offspring in a circus menagerie, a rasping stroke of the tongue that was both rough and tender; and so did this strange woman appear to me, her eyes devouring the esthetic beauty of her—to me apparent—prey. Like the coruscating flash of a flying meteor I saw with clarified senses and with a pang of aching remorse that I had been duped as though I had been but a simpleton.

To an attache she whispered a few words, rose, bowed with radiant face and eyes at Cyrus, and



with the carriage of an Oriental queen, the frou-frou of her silken petticoats sounded her maladroitness departure.

I was stunned. Phantasmagoric conceptions of a floating creature in purple swam before my bewildered eyes; spectacular visions of singing wraiths, and all having the identical facial expression and eyes of the mysterious woman, flitted before me with wrinkled faces convulsed with devilish glee. I had been duped, a cat's-paw was I, but why, and for whom, ay, for whom?

It was long after the court order had announced the withdrawal of the charges against my friend that I awoke from the profundity of my reverie, or coma if you will, and learned to my dismay that all the actors in this strange denouement had disappeared. So calling a hansom I hurried to the Scencios' apartments and entered the sitting-room.

Voices heard I, but whose was the man's? Not Cyrus', that I'll vouch. The woman's though I recognized as that of his wife, and the man's, great gods! could it in any manner be that of Wilburt's? If so, what were they doing in the next room?

A man's silk hat, cane and gloves attracted my immediate attention, whereupon I hastened to examine them.

They were Wilburt's!

Shame-faced, and burning with heat, I made my



way from the room and knocked for admittance on the suite across the aisle belonging to my friend's companion.

A tear-stained face greeted me.

"Where is Wilburt?" I hastily asked.

"We quarrelled," with a copious flush of new tears.

"About what?" 'Twas none of my business, yet what else was I to say?

"The Woman in Purple."

"The Woman in Purple?" I fairly shouted.

"Yes. Wilburt called her a cat, and I resented it."

"Most unbecoming of a gentleman!"

"He has taken a terrible dislike against this most charming woman, says that she has eyes like a devil and that she moves her body when walking like the wriggling of a snake."

"Not a superlative compliment!" and I forced myself to laugh. Yet his deductions coincided with mine in every respect.

"Did you meet Wilburt in the corridor?"

"No," and I flushed crimson as I bethought myself of the voices in the room across the hall.

"I so greatly admire the Woman in Purple, and would be pleased to make her acquaintance, but Wilburt is so obstinate."

"I'll see what I can do," whereupon I excused



myself and returned to the suite of my friend in a dreadful state of perturbation of mind and soul.

The voices were louder.

“Drop it!” commanded an angry voice.

“What in the name of heavens——”

Bang!

It was a pistol report; the door flew open, a burly man ran pellmell into me, knocking me down and stumbling over my prostrate body.

I heard a woman’s cry for help, caught the gleam of a pistol’s nicked barrel pointing at the stranger, then oblivion.

Some hours later when I recovered my shattered senses, I found myself alone in my room, my head swathed in bandages and a pungent odor pervading the atmosphere.

Directly I was dressed, descended the stairs and knocked for admittance at the suite occupied by my artist friend. They were empty.

Crossing over to the opposite suite I tried the same experiment, and with the same result.

The entire experience seemed most mysterious to me. Account for it I could not. The pistol shot, the woman’s terrified cry for help, the deadly gleam of the weapon in the hands of Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., and then the terrific blow upon my inoffensive head I remembered most poignantly. But where were the actors, ay, where?



## CHAPTER III.

### THE SHADOW ON THE CURTAIN.

Cyrus had returned from the court in a perplexing quandary. It had been his first experience as a prisoner at the bar of Justice, and had left no prepossessing glamor as an aftermath for a man of his esthetic temperament. Eternal perdition and damnation vowed he upon the woman's soul who had caused him such keen anxiety; and yet, it was not so very many hours later that the culprit forgot all about his imprecations and lost himself in the spider's well-woven net of mephistophelian machinations.

He was just thinking of going to lunch when, without warning, the Woman in Purple entered.

"Mr. Scencio, I believe?" displaying her pearly teeth and extending the pupils of her fascinating eyes, a trick of hers that had wrought havoc with my senses on a former occasion and did unaccountable mischief with the plastic hearts of the most volatile creature on earth, Man.



He lost his voice, his senses were stultified, his animation congealed; he was, as the darkies say in the sunny South, conjured.

"Is not this Mr. Cyrus Scencio, the artist?" asked the smooth musical voice of the woman before him as she helped herself to a seat and glued her sphinx-like orbs on him.

Like an automaton his hand went to his vest-pocket, produced a card, which he handed her without a word.

"I came to apologize, Mr. Scencio, for my error. Probably you are not aware that you possess a most remarkable double, a man the very counterpart of yourself. Who the man may be I do not know. Whether he really had my pearls is also an unsolved mystery. It was after I had had your case nolo-prossed that I returned to my apartments, and, would you believe me, there on the chiffonier were my beloved pearls. How do you like them?" throwing back a thin gauze-like garment that was attached to her waist.

The warm, half-bare bosom heaved majestically the double string of virgin pearls worth a king's ransom. And the effect upon the man was startling.

"Please leave me!" he gasped as if in suffocation, shielding his eyes as if in intense pain.

And the laugh that greeted his ears sounded like



heavenly music; low, modulous, it stole into his brain and pierced his very heart.

"Great gods of Rome!" and he leaped to his feet, a wild, haunted look in his eyes. "Who are you, woman?" gripping her by the arms and holding her with hands that were knotted like cords of twisted steel.

The hot, vise-like clutch upon her bare arms pained, yet her face was immobile.

"A model for real artists, sir," smiling most serenely.

"A model!" he echoed in a low, strange voice, a voice so altered that even his wife would not have recognized it.

"Yes. I have posed for Greek subjects, and for the world's most renowned painters and sculptors."

"A model!" he said softly, as he relaxed his hands from their hot hold and covered his eyes as she, with a perceptible increase in the heaving of her excited bosom, leaned forward like an Enchantress and seemed to read his very thought.

"You want me for a model!"

"I?" slowly receding.

"Yes," following him.

"How do you know?"

"Psychic telepathy."

"No, no!"



"Oh, yes, you do. I have seen your Venus at the National Academy of Design, and it's horrid, horrid. The woman's figure is coarse-grained, her limbs are like the shanks of a goblin."

"It was the model's fault, not mine," he whispered in awe.

"It is an outrage to your gifts, to your perceptibility of the true, classical beauty of the human form divine."

"I did the best I could."

"The best!" and she laughed merrily as she retraced her steps to the door and slowly turned the key in the lock unbeknown to the man who was caught in the spell of this woman's dominating beauty and influence.

"Please go, for I expect my wife at almost any moment."

"Are you a believer in art, real art?"

"I am."

"Do you recognize a perfect form when you see it, a symmetrical figure, one that would make your name immortal and rank you as the world's greatest painter of the divinest creature next to the gods?"

"I do."

"Then behold your next study for the Venus-to-be," and like magic her clothes left her body and she stood before the quaking artist, the living per-



sonification in pink flesh of what the real Venus must have looked like in the ages long since recalled.

"Great God in Heaven, spare me!" he cried in terror as he turned around and shoved his face toward the wall.

One minute, three minutes, five minutes, he remained in his marble-like posture, struck dumb by the terrible and fascinating beauty of the woman's nudity as Conscience fought a giant battle with the cankerous ascendancy of blind and implacable Passion.

"Woman!" and he spun around like a whipped top. "Eh?" and he stared in blank amazement at the empty room.

Like the aftermath of a giant storm when oaks and spruce tremble to their very roots, he stood there, quaking as if rocked by a cyclone.

His immaculate collar had wilted with the sudden outpour of perspiration, cold as the chill of death; his tapering fingers were dank and cramped in convulsed fists; his eyes were black, like the stare of king Torpor.

"By the eternal heavens! I'll barter my position, my respect, my all for this bewitching fiend in human form," and he snatched his hat from the rack and hastened from the building. In feverish eagerness he raced to the apartments across



from his own, and sent his card to the "Woman in Purple" via the elevator boy.

Minutes seemed an eternity to him as he awaited the return of the boy.

"At last!" he muttered as the lad descended.

"Here's your card, mister."

"Is she not in?"

"She is in, sir."

"What did she say?" handing him a quarter.

"She wrote something on the back of your card, sir."

"I have not the pleasure of knowing Mr. Cyrus Scencio," he read aloud.

With a muttered invective he left the place, returned to his office and tried to forget the woman in an avalanche of work, but to no avail. She loomed large on the horizon of his perspective, and could not be shook from the garden of his fertile memory. With a piece of chalk he marked the place where she had disrobed with a cross, then sat in his revolving chair and fastened his dark, glowing eyes to the fatal spot.

It was an hour later than usual that he returned to his domicile where, after a poor attempt to do justice to a most tempting feast, he rose and repaired to the parlor, to be joined in a few minutes by his wife and friends from the other suite across the hall.



Ostensibly he persisted keeping one of the shades up; across the street they were tightly drawn and dark; and, as he sat there, his thoughts were far removed from the conversation of his friends.

"I had an awful scare this morning, Cyrus," said his wife. "Florence, Wilburt and I had but just returned from the court, and as I entered our suite I thought I heard a peculiar noise in our bedroom. Are you listening, dear?"

"I hear what you have to say."

"I was somewhat frightened at first, and called Wilburt, who was in the hall, to enter our rooms and investigate."

"That's why Mr. Everett failed to meet you," said the wife of Cassaway to her spouse.

"Was he looking for me?"

"Yes."

"Wilburt placed his hat, cane and gloves on the table in the sitting-room and listened for several minutes."

Across the street, in the room that Cyrus was watching, a light appeared, showing a moving shadow reflected on the cream-colored shade.

"Hearing no strange noise Wilburt had me show him the room. At first we saw nothing, though the window had been opened. A sudden gush of wind poured through the window, frightening me terribly as it slammed the door to with a loud bang."



“And your jewels?” asked Mrs. Cassaway.

“I am coming to them now. I yelled a little as the door flew to, whilst your husband started to investigate. On the dresser I usually keep a small mahogany box containing my jewels, and it was found missing. Naturally I grew excited, and what happened then seems somewhat indistinct.”

“It does to me, too,” commented young Cassaway, “for it occurred so quickly that it was all over in thirty seconds. I heard the deep breathing of a man under the bed, and when I got on my knees to investigate I received a frightful kick on my breast. The man rose with the box clasped in one hand and a pistol in the other. I commanded him to drop the box, he fired point blank at me, whereupon we grappled, seeing that he had missed his mark. Janice screamed murder, and in the scuffle the man dropped the box, the door flew open and I ran after the escaping rascal, calling for help. In the race through the room the man knocked Bangs down, but fell himself. And as might be expected I pounced upon him and tried to overpower the scoundrel, receiving this as a memento of my encounter,” exhibiting a red lump upon his head. “The fellow had a billy which he used upon our friend Bangs and myself with equal effectiveness and with such good result that he eluded me.”



"Did you summon the police?" from Cyrus.

"No."

"What!" wheeling about and eyeing his friend sharply.

"Of course not, you simpleton. Do you think that we want every little trifling episode aired in the papers for the delectation of the vulgar herd?"

"How many times must I tell you that your so-called 'vulgar herd' is far better in moral principles than your silk-stockings aristocrat who has no other claim upon Society than his bags of yellow gold?"

"And, friend, how long will it take you to eradicate your Bohemian sophistries from your brain?"

"Until this Government is really governed for the masses and not for a favored few."

"You'll get over your quixotic ideas before you're forty."

"Hardly."

"Here comes our recalcitrant friend," said Janice of me as I entered the room.

A friendly nod from Cyrus greeted me, yet in the twinkling of an eye I perceived that he was not his usual self. Something was awry, that I saw at once.

A game of cribbage was proposed, and, as Cyrus declined to play, I had to submit with good grace and take his place.



We had been playing for about an hour when Cyrus rose and left the room, only to return in a few moments with a large drawing pad and crayon pencil. Seating himself near the window, he lighted a Russian cigarette, of which he was very fond, and soon was lost in the profundity of his reverie.

Wilburt and Mrs. Scencio were having the time of their lives, and I, a spectator, saw the scarlet tinge creep to Wilburt's wife's cheeks every time his fingers appeared to linger on the hands of Mrs. Scencio.

Something about the stillness of my chum attracted my attention, and forthwith I stole a secret glance to where he sat; then by some subtle instinct focused my eyes on the curtain across the street. I saw something, ay, a silhouette saw I, outlined most clear and perfect, reflected with the clearness of a photographic lense upon the shade. It was but a line, with a slight concave curve near the top, a solitary line that lost itself in the gap of a dusky spreading blanket of impenetrable blackness.

What meant it? What its mystical portent, and, of all strange queries, why came it from the room inhabited by the Woman in Purple?

"What a narrow squeeze we had, love!"

Instantly I drew my eyes from the perplexing



diagram on the shade across the street and stared in blank amazement at the couple before me.

"Pardon me, friends, but did you speak?"

"Why no; but why do you ask?"

"Oh, I thought I heard you address me, and, being just then somewhat removed from my present sphere I may not have heard what was said to me."

"Then you were dreaming?" from Mrs. Scencio.

"If you will pardon me, yes," wondering all the while where Wilburt's wife could have gone.

"And had you pleasant dreams?" from Wilburt.

"Far from it. Where's your wife?"

"Mrs. Agan called, so she's gone to reveal her diplomatic prowess in excusing herself to this most charming woman, who, unfortunately, came at a most inopportune moment."

"But what of your dream, Mr. Bangs?"

I looked at her flushed face for several moments ere replying:

"I dreamed" (leaning toward them and speaking sotto voce) "of what happened between you two this morning when, for a puerile reason, I was clubbed on the head most unmercifully and unnecessarily."

The startled look that crept to the eyes of Mrs. Scencio was instantly dispelled upon the re-entrance of Mrs. Cassaway.

Across the street I peered so as not to reveal my



thoughts, and what I saw focused upon the shade roused my curiosity to a still higher pitch.

An additional line had been affixed to the previous one, whilst the black space upon the lower part of the shade had been lessened. And Cýrus, his head slightly bowed to one side and cigarette limp and dead hanging from his netherlip, was sketching.

"I will return just as soon as possible," I heard Wilburt's wife say as she again left the room, which brought my flagging senses back to what was uppermost in my mind.

As soon as the door was closed I leaned my head in one hand and eyed the man before me, whose face was the very apotheosis of unalloyed hatred and anger.

"The scalawag who knocked me down and tried his muscles upon my head was, who?"

"How should I know?"

"Do you wish me to enlighten you?"

"If you can."

"He was your butler!"

Had a bomb exploded he could not have been more surprised than he was at that precise moment. And the woman's face grew ashen, whilst her hands were convulsed in cringing fear and horror.

"You were——"



"Stop!" and he reached across the table and clutched my arm.

"Wilburt Cassaway, you are a scoundrel. You have hated me from the time you entered college, you tried your uttermost to alienate the affections of Cyrus, my best and only friend, you have hated me all these years, hate me at this moment worse than the devil does the virtue of a maiden or the celibacy of a priest."

"I'll—kill—you!" he hissed, his sibilant voice rasping the air as he ground his teeth in impotent rage.

"Please do not quarrel," and the woman started to plead with the seething volcano beside her, whilst I returned my gaze to the window across the street, where another line had been added to the existing one; and Cyrus, lost to all knowledge of his surroundings, even to the fast impending tragedy that was destined to wreck his life and home, sat like a graven image, penciling the strange, fantastic lines appearing upon the shade across the street.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RUPTURE.

The man's scarlet frightened the woman to the point of hysterics, but I, who had found him in his true colors, it had no more effect save, if possible, bridling my itching tongue for the all-pervading moment.

In falling, after the unexpected onslaught by the burly individual, I caught a faint glimpse of his facial features as he sprawled over me, and they had appeared more than passingly familiar to me. But the brutal blow upon my inoffensive head had shattered my wits for several hours. And, not until night, and whilst stepping from the elevator, did the remembrance of the man's features loom before me in the shape of possible identity. And, had there been any doubt remaining, it would have been dispelled by the blushing face of the butler as he discerned my then bandaged head.

"I'll have you fired out of this apartment house, you insolent rascal!"



"Because I detected your crime is no reason why you should thirst for vengeance."

"What crime?" sneeringly.

"Forbidden fruit, sir."

"Come now, this is no place for Biblical platitudes or parables."

"Then," and I eyed him unflinchingly, "I accuse you of the most damnable and heinous offence against decent society, that of secret concupiscence."

"Have you three been enjoying yourself?" asked Mrs. Cassaway as she returned and took up her cards.

"Oh, yes, we've been rehearsing the days of our halcyon youth, friend Bangs and I," lied he, as he busied himself with the score-board.

"How still your husband is," of Mr. Scencio.

"He very often sits thus for hours at a time."

Involuntarily I leaned back and looked at the mysterious panoramic display on the shade belonging to the Woman in Purple. And a change had taken place. The lines that I had at first perceived still remained, yet there was another addition, a broken line about two feet from the last one, leaving the hitherto seen dark patch, broken into two unequal sizes.

The playing became most desultory, and after awhile we mutually agreed to repair to the res-



taurant in the basement and have refreshments.

I noted that as Mrs. Scencio started toward her husband with the evident intention of asking him to accompany her, that he waved her away with his hand without even raising his eyes. So without him we descended in the elevator and had a most tempting luncheon served.

“By the way,” said Mrs. Cassaway, “is it not strange the way Cyrus’ case was dismissed this morning?”

“I should say so. Yet,” and he stroked his mustache as he eyed his wife furtively, “I believe that it would not be such a great surprise in the long run if (staring at me sharply) the man who had had the warrant sworn out for ‘Woman in Purple’ would reveal the cause of his peculiar conduct, his strange *modus operandi* in having his best and only friend arrested for robbery.”

“And who was this man?” asked his wife.

“A lawyer named Everett Bangs.”

The knife dropped from my hand and my face grew hot and red; the spoon fell from the trembling hand of Mrs. Scencio, and an “Oh” escaped the lips of Mrs. Cassaway, whilst the thrower of this bomb sat unperturbed in his seat and sipped his wine, as though he really enjoyed himself.

Probably he did. I swear though that at that



moment I could have killed him with much show of relish and with little compunction.

"You!" gasped Mrs. Scencio.

"Ay, I," and I prepared myself for defence, if such I had, if the hypnotic influence of a modern daughter of the offspring of Perseis could be deemed a palpable extenuation of a breach of betrayed friendship.

"You must be joking," from Mrs. Cassaway.

"I wish I were. Unfortunately, though, I am in earnest," and then and there I confessed my sins and received absolution from both women, but not from the man.

"The woman in question is a minx, a street hussy and——"

"Wilburt!"

The eyes he turned upon his wife were not the kind that a new husband is expected to lavish upon his betterhalf, neither were their gleam conducive to good feeling on my part as their scintillating pupils glared at me without stint, eyes that spoke of a bitter war to be fought between the two of us from this day forth.

"Do you expect me to place any credence in such a fish-story?" he asked of me with much show of heat.

"Why not?"

"Because if you do you are mistaken in your



man. Some sinister design, some incomprehensible motive is at the bottom of your strange procedure. What's this siren's name?"

"I do not know."

"What!"

"I have spoken the solemn truth."

"Truth fiddlesticks! You lawyers are skilled artists in the school of circumlocution."

"Neither mendacity nor paraphrastics have I been guilty of practicing upon my friends, or those purporting to be as such," and I returned his look with accumulative interest.

"This has gone far enough," rising. "I do not care for your society nor your immediate contiguity to my residence, so it's up to you to vacate this apartment house, seeing that I leased the suites and not you. It was only through Cyrus that you happened to come here in the first place."

In silence we returned to the Scencio's apartment where I, with burning heart and storm-swept senses, lost myself for several minutes in the unraveling of a shadow conundrum.

Two new lines had been added, lines that had a wonderful suggestiveness to even me, who am but a prosaic lawyer. And Cyrus, in his selfsame posture, moved not a muscle as he sat with his eyes fixed upon the curtain across the street.

The whole eerie procedure was getting upon my



nerves. Probably because I could not come to a logical conclusion as to their intent. And the shadow-lines never moved an iota. Looking fixedly for several minutes I became startled by the discovery that the black shadow moved upwards by degrees, slowly but surely, thus lengthening the strange lines upon the curtain. And, by heaven! a foot appeared silhouetted near the bottom of the curtain connecting with the main line.

"Oh, I'm dreaming!" I heard myself say as I rubbed my eyes and turned them from the window.

To have gazed upon the smiling faces of the two chatting women and Wilburt Cassaway, one would not have thought that I was a pariah, an outcast, and bidden to leave the premises. And the secret knowledge gleaned by me this night smote my senses with white-heated shame and anger. Of Cyrus' wife I knew next to nothing, of Wilburt's very little more. Both were darlings of society, both were welcomed to the houses of the elite, and both were but lately married. One of them being the integral cause of her husband's doting father disinheriting his son, the other seemingly in love with her chosen spouse, yet acting so compromisingly.

To get away from the perplexing thoughts I returned my gaze to the spectral-like diagram across the street and watched the moving of the deeper











black dwindle into a narrow space, dwindle until it was but about sixteen inches in width. Then suddenly, without warning, the entire black space disappeared, to the topmost line was added another silhouette, and, believe me, I covered my face with my hands and blushed until the perspiration itched my scalp; for the complete silhouette was that of a nude woman, but what a figure! Never had I seen such splendidly proportioned limbs save in marble or on canvas. When I looked again, for look I had to, though the earth should have opened and swallowed me, I was struck dumb by the total disappearance of the figure, and in its place appeared the word "Venus."

For a moment I was deeply perplexed, then suddenly I laughed until I was forced to make use of my handkerchief. And why? Simply because I had reasoned the entire procedure to a most logical conclusion. Either the Woman in Purple or somebody else was giving a stereopticon view of Greek statuary as known before the Christian era. And, what was most likely that in changing the focus of the lense the lines and the last, so fearfully realistic, had escaped the white scenic cloth usually used in such performances.

And I was just wondering whether my friend had really been engaged in sketching, when his wife tip-



toed to where he sat and peered over his shoulder at his work.

It is a well-known fact that an artist must have a living model to pose for his subject, and I dare say that Mrs. Scencio knew this to be so. Yet she went into a fit of anger on sight of his work.

"Cyrus!" snatching the drawing from his lap.

"Such vulgar drawings!" and she deliberately tore it into two halves.

The pupils of his eyes lost themselves in his dark, melancholy orbs as he leaped to his feet in anger and amazement.

"What's he been doing?" asked Wilburt, as he came to investigate the trouble between the newly-weds.

"She destroyed a beautiful conception of mine."

"Let me see it," and he took the two parts and spread them on the table.

"How can you look at such a sketch?" asked Mrs. Scencio of Wilburt's wife.

"I see absolutely nothing wrong in this work. The figure is marvelous, perfect."

"You ought to blush with shame, Florence. Here, take the filthy thing," handing it to Mrs. Scencio, who took it and tore it into a thousand infinitesimal parts and flung the scraps into the wastebasket.

"I—I——" he choked for a moment with his all-



consuming wrath. "By heaven! I'll have the original for my model; I'll have her in the flesh, and I'll make my name immortal. To-morrow I resign from the art department of your father's paper and resume my neglected profession, that of a painter. And I'll live, too, if I have to leave these quarters and rent an attic in Harlem."

I myself admired his determination, though I doubted the issue. The man was a genius, a born manipulator of the brush and palette, but genius and no money will not help to keep an extravagant wife, will not help to keep a roof over one's head, nor keep the larder filled with the pleasing things of life. Perseverance, though, will do a lot. I myself know of a case in Washington, D. C., where a young man, whilst laboring at his chosen profession, lived for four months and three weeks and five days on the meagre allowance of five cents a day, eating nothing in all that time save rye bread with molasses and water. But such heroic treatment soon saps the vitality and leaves a once healthy mind and body a physical and mental wreck.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE TRAGEDY OF A GRAY GLOVE.

It was with extreme reluctance that I vacated my bachelor suite and located myself—fortunately—right next door. I had a special object in being in as close proximity to my friend as possible. A suspicion that fed upon my thought would not down, and it is probably well that it did not, for otherwise a most dire calamity would surely have overtaken my artist chum.

A moth will hover near a light until its wings are singed, and so with Cyrus, who not only scorched his heart but seared his soul until it was black as Satan's.

True to his night's declaration he resigned his position as head of Wilburt Cassaway, Sr.'s, newspaper's art department and hired a small studio on Fourth Avenue, near Madison Square. But he had not as yet made any arrangements for the securing of his much wanted model. How was he to act? He did not even know the woman's name, abso-



lutely nothing knew he of this seductive siren, so terribly fascinating in her clinging dress of purple.

The clerk in charge of the desk at the Apartment House could give no other information than that a Mr. Stewart, a real estate broker, had rented the apartments for six months for a friend of his sister's, spicing his information with the irritating news that the woman was English, of royalty, and staying here incognito. The last named I believed, but I had my doubts as to the former. Just who she might be was a most perplexing mystery, and goaded me to further investigation. Stewart, the broker, could give me no clues whatever. His sister was in Paris, and the woman herself seemed bent upon ignoring me in the future.

I was standing at my window and looking out at the passersby, when a handsome team of prancing bays drove up to the apartments across the street. And I saw, too, something that provoked me to exasperation. Cyrus, with his chiseled beauty flushed with vehement excitement, approached the footman, and as I bethought myself of the rascal's nerve, the Woman in Purple emerged.

"Pardon me," lifting his hat and bowing before her.

"Sir!" with a haughty stare at the offending culprit.



Whether her anger was assumed or natural I, of course, could not say with any certainty. But the change upon her face was startling. The lobes of her shell-like ears were scarlet, her Grecian nostrils were expanding and white as wax, her eyes shone like a basilisk's as she surveyed the dumb-founded man before her.

"Make way!"

Burning with shame he stepped to one side.

"Forgive me, madam," and his imploring look would have melted an adamant heart.

"Twenty-third street!" she called to the driver, and the next moment she was gone.

He smote his fists in anger, and pulled at his mustache until his upper lip shone red.

Spying me at the window he hailed me, and as I finally stood beside him on the sidewalk, he unbosomed himself to me like a brother.

"Did you notice my reception, Et'?"

"Aye, I did."

"What thought you as she ignored my advance?"

"That I might have made a mistake in my previous deductions."

"And they were?"

"That she was a minx."

"A what?"

"Not exactly what one would expect of a real lady."



"And now?"

"And now? Oh, I reverse my preconceived opinions and call her a lady of the first water variety."

"Really?"

"I am not joking."

"Did I deserve it?"

"You certainly did, and more."

"I do not think so."

"No?"

"No."

"And pray why?"

"On account of other events."

"For instance?"

"The shadow on the shade."

"Oh, you're mistaken there."

"Do you think so?"

"I do."

"What was it?"

"A stereopticon view."

"Quite logical, eh?" laughing softly.

"I think so."

"And my wife destroyed the sketch!" reminiscently. "What would you say if I disagreed with you relative to the mysterious shadow on the curtain?"

"You would have to give me a very palpable hypothesis, one that would bear investigation."

"Which I will be able to do in the very near



future, provided, of course, that I do not err in my present calculations."

"And they are?" eyeing him sharply.

"That the Woman in Purple will be my model."

"Whew!" and I whistled softly.

"The shadow on the shade was the natural outline of her nude body."

"Stop!"

"Look here," angrily. "I know what I am talking about. I saw that identical figure before, yes, no longer than yesterday in my private office," and then and there he related to me his experience with the mysterious woman.

I said nothing as he asked me to enter his apartment where we expected to talk about the future prospects of his anticipated success as a painter. But this looked-for dialogue was rudely dispelled on entering his parlor.

"I wonder where my wife could have gone?" and he proceeded to go through the rooms on a hunt for Mrs. Scencio.

"Did you leave her here when you left several minutes ago?"

"Yes."

"Did you inform her as to your destination?"

"I did. Why?"

"May I not ask all sorts of foolish questions?"

"What in the devil's name are you driving at,



Et'?" and he took a hold of my shoulders and turned my face toward the light.

"Where did you say that you were bound for?"

"To my studio."

"And were you?"

"Yes. But the woman across the street came between my destination and my purpose."

"Sit down," shoving him into a chair and seating myself across the table from him.

"What has caused your present agitation?"

"Do I appear unduly excited?" I asked, as I endeavored to still my madly running nerves.

"You certainly do."

"Cyrus, you are a good fellow, but somewhat contumacious."

"Thanks," dryly, lighting a cigarette.

"You married against your better judgment and my advice."

He looked at me narrowly but vouchsafed no response.

"You married a woman of whom you knew nothing."

No answer, but dense puffs of pungent smoke.

"Cyrus, beware, you are harboring a viper in your bosom."

"A viper?"

"Yes, one that will sting you behind your back, rob you of the trust reposed in the fidelity and vir-



tue of——” I could not finish what I had planned to break in a roundabout manner.

“My wife?” hoarsely.

“Aye, your wife,” I echoed, frightened at the terrible glint in his eyes and the rasping of his voice.

“By heaven!” and he smote his clenched fist on the table as he glared at me as if preparing for a spring upon my throat.

“Do you see that?”

“What?” turning his head slightly.

“That gray-looking object on the settee there?” still pointing my trembling hand toward it.

The chair flew from under him as he shot to his feet in a convulsive burst of anger.

“Damn it!” and he swore lustily as he fished out a man’s gray walking glove.

“Could you find the owner?”

“If I could I’d grind his bones to powder.”

“You have been married less than three months and yet you are unhappy and miserable.”

“Yes. I confess it, Et’.”

“How did Wilburt Cassaway act during your joint honeymoon?”

His eyes grew large with surprise, the perspiration began to set in great beads upon his high brow as he cramped the glove in his gnarled fist.

“Do you think— Oh! it cannot be.”

“Why not?”



"For heaven's sake, Et', remember what you are about."

"It is because I have your welfare at heart that I am placing myself in this painful position in order to open your eyes to the true state of affairs, not that I would cause you any pangs of unnecessary remorse, believe me."

"Wait here just one moment, please," and he left the room, whilst I drummed upon the table with my fingers and fought the silent battle within my raging soul.

Presently he returned, but not alone. With him was Mrs. Cassaway, blanched face and tear-stained eyes looked appealingly first at Cyrus and then at me.

"Now," as she seated herself, "where is your husband?"

"I think he went to the bank, but I am not positive."

"Can you identify this article?" showing her the glove.

Her face blushed crimson, then paled to a deadly gray.

"It is Wilburt's," she whispered in awe.

"I thought so. I found it over there," pointing to the settee.

"Oh!" and she clasped her delicate hands to her breast and began to shake with sobs.



"Why, hello!" said a laughing voice, and the next moment a frightened gasp escaped Mrs. Scencio who, dressed in her street costume, had entered unannounced.

"What has happened, dear?" going up to Cyrus, who repulsed her with a gesture of the hand.

"One moment, please."

The glove was lying on the table, and spying it her face went white with fright.

"Have you seen this article before?" handing her the glove.

"It is not yours, is it?" assuming an attitude of nonchalance that was a flat failure.

"You are aware that it is not mine."

"Then why do you ask me such a nonsensical question?"

He bit his lips as he tried to stem the rising torrent of denunciatory words.

"I found it on the settee and wondered who the owner was, seeing that it did not belong to me."

"And how came it there?"

"That is what I command you to answer."

"Me?"

"Yes, you!"

"Well sir, seeing that you were in and I out, it is for you to say who the owner may be," wherewith she proceeded to take off her hat and veil and lay them on the table.



"Mrs. Cassaway, you identify this glove as belonging to whom?"

"My—hus—band's."

Something akin to a stifled gasp slipped through the compressed lips of Mrs. Scencio as she heard her friend announce the owner of the glove.

"I have hunted the rooms for the scoundrel, but he appears to have made good his escape. But he'll come home to-night and, then, well I'll not say in advance what's in store for the scoundrel."

"You talk as if you were drunk, Cyrus."

"Do I?"

"Yes. And your talk is most insulting."

"I've been a cat's-paw, a cat's-paw for you and that profligate whelp, do you hear?"

"How dare you, sir!"

"Dare!" he shouted, springing toward her and gripping her hands.

"I'll——"

"You'll release the woman, sir, at once!"

I spun around and stared in consternation at the red face of Wilburt Cassaway, Sr.

"I resigned with honor from your paper, so what do you want here, here in my private apartment?"

"So you did, but you left something at my establishment."

"I?"

"Yes, you."



"And what was it?"

"Your honor and respect."

I saw the shame light his face and eyes at this assertion which was both true and known.

"Oh, if I were but dead, dead!" moaned Mrs. Cassaway, Jr., as she wrung her hands in abject grief.

The look in the old gentleman's eyes was a study in psychology. He vacillated between the desire to be deaf to the intense agony of his daughter-in-law and between his desire of fondling her in his arms and soothing her troubled soul.

And I becoming closer and closer woven in the ramifications of this domestic tragedy, ground my heel in simon-pure rage and anger. I cared not an iota for the woman, I cared less for the son of this aged millionaire, I cared the world for the man whom I called my chum, and whom I could not save nor protect.

"The woman there, who is she?"

"As you surmise, sir, your son's wife," and I perceived a fiendish glee light the dark sombre eyes of Cyrus as he glared at the old gentleman who was fighting twin emotions in a most tumultuous heart.

"Florence Esty?"

"Yes," and she sobbed convulsively with her head buried in her hands on the table.



"Child, child!" and he staggered halfway toward her, then stopped abruptly.

"You! You!" and she choked with rising sobs as she endeavored to speak to the man who had disinherited her husband.

"Daughter!" and he opened his arms to receive the woman.

I turned my face to the wall as she flew to his outstretched arms; I cursed in low, articulate gasps as I bethought myself of the renegade who was tied to her for life; I tore my hair in frenzy as I saw the future unrolled in the perspective wherein the figure of my artist friend struggled between the belching fires of hell's passion, lust and incest.

"What is the meaning of this domestic drama?" he asked of Cyrus when he had succeeded in somewhat stilling the wild sobbing of his son's wife.

"Your son's an unmitigated scoundrel."

"That I'll not argue."

"And the first time I face him I am going to shoot him."

"You are what?"

"I am going to kill him."

"My son Wilburt?"

"Him, and no other."

"I thought that you two were friends," he said helplessly as he held the woman to his breast with strained muscles and quaking hands.



"Friends! No. A man who will rupture the relations between man and wife is no friend, but a fiend."

"Is it not time that you ceased your remarks, Cyrus?"

"What is your husband driving at, Mrs. Scencio?"

"I am driving at this," stepping up to the old man and shaking his fist in the latter's face. "Intrigue, vice and crime has taken place under the sanctity of my roof. Your son has been—— Well, I guess you know what I mean without my shocking the sensitive natures of the women present."

"You brute!" and he raised his fist as if to strike Cyrus.

"Strike!" and he folded his arms and stared without the bat of an eyelash for fully two minutes at the dumbfounded father of Wilburt.

"I found his glove in my room; other things of late have had a tendency to rouse my suspicions and, if my friend Bangs would but open his mouth and reveal certain secrets that he holds, I am positive that I would be granted an absolute divorce in ten minutes, were I to apply for one."

"You will have to come home with me, dear," stroking his daughter-in-law's glossy hair.

"Oh, if I were but dead!" she wailed afresh as she clung to him in this her first great sorrow.



"No; she won't."

"And why not?"

"Because I intend to see her husband first, and if she should leave and take up her quarters at your residence, it is a foregone conclusion that her scallawag husband will not be seen in this immediate vicinity for some time to come."

"You impudent rogue!"

"Cyrus!"

"Sist!" from me as I heard a soft voice in the hall ask to be shown to the suite occupied by the Scencios.

There was a knock upon the panels of the door, all the actors of this strange domestic drama, save Cyrus, hastened to a seat and, with a "Come in!" from my friend, the door opened, and the Woman in Purple entered.

I cannot describe her smile, for it is beyond the pen of mortal man to do it justice. Cyrus probably could reproduce its likeness on canvas, but the pen, never.

And what of the enslaved man's look? To the tips of his fingers he trembled, his eyes glowed with the unmistakable glow of admiration, the kind that is so far removed from a moral and conscientious husband.

"Pardon me," stepping backwards as if prepara-



tory to a hasty exit, "I thought that you and your wife were alone."

"You are not intruding," and Cyrus helped her to a seat.

"I came on an humble mission, sir, that of obtaining your pardon for my error."

"Oh!" and he laughed heartily, "is that what you seek?"

"Yes. Are you aware of the fact, Mr. Scencio, that you have an exact counterpart?"

"No. This is news."

"Well, you have," smiling sweetly at Cyrus and his wife, "and it is he who caused me to act so hasty."

"No harm was done, I assure you. Mr. Cassaway, this is a new acquaintance of ours, a most delightful acquisition to our host of friends, I assure you."

"Delighted, delighted," and he must have been so, judging from the way he strutted as he shook her tapering hand.

What struck me as most ludicrous was that each of us were introduced, yet none, not one of us knew the lady's name, nor for that matter did the introducer.

And Florence Cassaway appeared to forget all her present sorrow as she conversed with this most fascinating woman. All appeared to be enjoying



the newcomer's bewitching personality save the wife of Cyrus, who frowned her disfavor and disapproval with a most provoking candor.

"Yes," I heard the musical voice say to Cyrus, "it is dangerous. These walking doubles are prone to get one in more or less trouble, especially is this so when one happens to be married."

"I agree with you, Miss ——, Miss ——," and the old gentleman stuttered and stumbled in his speech, but none of us could help him; and, as the woman seemed bent upon withholding her identity, Cyrus hastened to cover the threatening breach by saying:

"Mr. Cassaway is right. Suppose now that my wife happened to discover my double in the delightful act of osculation; say that some modern Helen should be lavishing her affections upon this double of mine, then what? I should be accused of infidelity, immorality and what not, though I were as innocent as a babe."

"I should love to see such a catastrophe," whereupon everybody laughed, even Mrs. Scencio, though I judged hers to be not exactly of the healthy sort.

And forthwith the conversation became general in its topic; no impinged shadows rose to stare at the individual actors; happiness and good cheer seemed to be each person's chief asset as the seconds ran into minutes and the minutes into the hour.



And then, as the laughter became the merriest, I asked myself this question: Where was Wilburt Cassaway, Jr?



## CHAPTER VI.

### WHEN CONSCIENCE DIED.

The rays of a setting sun shone through the large window and revealed to good advantage the copper-burnished tresses of my lady in purple; and later, when the electric bulbs overhead were lighted, it enhanced the exquisite loveliness of her alabaster-like face, neck and arms, until the menfolks became enamored of her seductive beauty.

I noted, too, after an hour's conversation, that she had a slight foreign accent, but not English. To me it sounded as if Italian, though the woman lacked all the physical attributes of a daughter of sunny Italy.

Here were three charming women, and as diametrically different in status, color and personality as could possibly be brought together in a drawing-room. Each possessed an especial attractiveness either in facial contour, eyes or figure. Set them in a crowded gathering and they would draw instant attention. Yet here in the room but



one shone pre-eminently, but one held the pivotal point of attention, and she was the Woman in Purple.

"You must have had some kind of an entertainment in your apartments last night?" I heard Cyrus ask of her as he watched her narrowly as she spoke.

"Yes. But pray how do you know?"

"Occular demonstration."

"How could you possibly have seen the entertainment when the shades were tightly drawn?"

"How about the possibility of reflective silhouettes on the curtain from time to time?"

"And did you see anything?"

"I certainly did."

"Some friends of mine gave a stereopticon exhibition, one that was most instructive, especially to lovers of true art."

I laughed softly as I perceived the dark frown set upon the brow of Cyrus and enjoyed his discomfiture of mind, for this unexpected announcement from the woman herself, coinciding so beautifully with my previous asseverations relative to the fantastic lines on the shade, nonplused the somewhat egotistical artist and overset all of his well laid plans.

"By the way," said Mrs. Scencio, "I have had a luncheon ordered in the restaurant, the private



dining-room, so let us do it justice. Mr. Cassaway, you lead the way with Florence."

"Pardon me," said my lady in purple as she rose, "but I must really excuse myself, for I had but just dined as I entered."

Mrs. Scencio had possessed herself of my arm, and as the woman excused herself so adroitly, I heard my companion heave an inaudible sigh of relief. However, she received a rude shock the next moment from her spouse.

"Et'," addressing me, "you escort my wife to the dining-room and do your level best at entertaining her and her friends. I've no desire to eat, in fact I could not if I would. I will remain and talk with our new acquaintance here until you all return."

"Oh, but I must be going, Mr. Scencio, for I have an important engagement at the Savoy Theatre."

"Won't you inspect some of my early work?" and he busied himself with a large portfolio containing several dozens of paintings of a nondescript nature, as his wife, seething with anger, repaired to the dining-room to act as hostess for his nonplused friends.

"Now," and Cyrus closed the door, threw the portfolio on the floor and stood directly in front of the woman. "Now——"



"You appear excited, Mr. Scencio," half shading her liquid eyes with her drooping eyelashes as she gazed into his flushed face.

"Who and what are you, madam?"

"Miss, if you please," toying with her thousand-dollar purse.

"May I ask your name?"

"Silence."

"I hear nothing," after a pause.

"Neither do I, except your silver voice."

"Quite a superlative compliment," laughing softly.

"And do you not appreciate it?"

"Most assuredly."

For a moment he meditated as he studied the sylph-like outline of her figure, speculating and conjecturing as to whether she were an actress, a model or a Society dame from some European court.

"You paid me a visit at my office yesterday. Why?"

"Me?" innocently.

"Yes."

"You must be in error, sir."

"The shadow on the shade last night was what?"

"A stereopticon view."

"Why deal in paraphrastics and mendacity?"

"Why speculate about a trifle?"



"Why cloak yourself in impenetrable mystery?"

"Why rack your brains for nothing?"

Up and down the room he paced in a wild endeavor to drown the ascending words of vituperative expletives as the woman sat in silence, a faint perceptible smile hovering at the corners of her rosy mouth.

"I want you for a model!" spinning around on one heel and eyeing her intensely.

"Me?" opening her eyes in astonishment.

"You."

"Why, I could not pose if I tried," and she laughed merrily as he bit his netherlip in vexation, for, unquestionably the woman was stringing him.

"You said that you had posed for the world's greatest artists, for painters and sculptors."

"You seem to be joking, Mr. Scencio," aggrievedly, as she lowered her eyes and fixed them on the points of her peeping pomps.

"You have haunted me in my sleep, shattered my nerves and changed me to a driveling idiot."

"Then I had better be going," rising slowly.

"Stand!"

The spasmodic twitch of her netherlip may have denoted fear, it may, too, have signalized triumph—who knows?

"Am I not under the protection and roof of a gentleman?"



"You are."

"Then why do you speak to me so rudely?"

"First you lead me on, then repulse me. Why? What is the underlying motive of your strange procedure?"

"You speak in riddles, sir."

"Do I?"

"Most undoubtedly."

"This morning you repulsed me with scorn and contempt."

"You?" opening her eyes to their fullest extent.

"Come now, this farce has gone the limit."

"This is the first meeting between you and I since the court room incident, believe me. Your counterpart insulted me this morning by addressing me unsolicited."

"And the scene in the privacy of my office yesterday?"

"I went there as I was in duty bound to do, to apologize."

"And the model business?"

"Was an illusioned spectacle. Metaphysics was at the bottom of it, sir. You dreamed certain improbable things, for instance: The disrobing of a beautiful woman in the privacy of your sanctum, did you not?"

"Well, I'll be eternally damned!" and he swore profusely under his breath as he stood before the



window for several moments in a quandary of doubt and perplexity.

"What's your name?"

"Silence."

"Sist!" and he held his hand up for a moment and listened.

"What was it?"

"It sounded to me like a smothered sneeze from a man, probably in the corridor," and after a lapse of several minutes he seated himself beside her and took one of her hands in his.

"Did you hear anything suspicious?"

"No. I heard absolutely nothing," and her eyes shone like twin stars as she sat there with her right hand in his hot grip, speculating as to the ultimate outcome of her machinations.

"And your name?"

"Silence."

For one solitary moment he felt like cursing, then reaction set in and he laughed boisterously.

"You're a strange creature, and beautiful, ye gods! What a picture for my Venus-to-be!"

"Then you are really engaged in painting the goddess of beauty and love?"

"I am."

"And who's your model?"

"The most beautiful, full-blooded woman in New York."



"How wonderful!"

"Isn't it?"

"And what's her name?"

"Unfortunately she hasn't any, at least I have not discovered it. Probably she dropped from the heavens."

"How delightfully you put it. And has this paragon of beauty with the immortal gods as her ancestors, posed for you yet?"

"Yes."

"Really now?"

"I'm not joking."

"And what was the result?"

"I was blinded, paralyzed, struck dumb and motionless by the terrible beauty of her roseate flesh."

"You shock me, Mr. Scencio," turning her head to one side.

"Why so? Have I said anything offensive?"

"Well, not exactly offensive, but——but——"

"What is it?"

"Your suggestiveness."

"In what respect?"

"Why you seemed to imply that the woman stood before you in all her—let us call it—classic nudity."

"So she did."

"Then I am trebly shocked."

"Then Miss—— Miss——"



"Call me Silence."

"All right," laughing, "have it your way. I'll call you 'Silence' hereafter, and if it should cause you any annoyance in the future, remember that you and not I am to blame."

"We will not quarrel over the name."

"As I was going to say, Miss Silence, a woman in posing for an artist——"

"Must disrobe?"

"Not in all cases. In the study of Venus now it is most imperative that an artist catch the symmetrical outline of the body; and how could he do so if the woman were dressed?"

"But the shame of it, sir, the shame!"

"There is no mock modesty in art, believe me."

"I cannot bring myself to believe it."

"Why doubt me? The question of Sex is lost entirely, submerged, so to speak, when art is concerned. In the art schools where young men and women have their training, those who elect to make the human form divine their special study have live models to pose for them."

"But not the men and women in the same class?"

"Yes."

"And do the men pose too?"

"Most assuredly."

"And——and," turning her golden head to one side and talking in a very low voice, "do they, too,



pose in all their virginal beauty?"

"They do. One day there may be a woman posing, the next a man. It all depends upon the fancy of the instructor."

"How shocking!"

"To the layman probably, but not to an artist."

"Have you made any material headway with your Venus?"

"I have and I haven't."

"Which means?"

"That it is in a semi-embryonic condition. The conception is good, the woman's beauty of figure is perfect, divinely so, but there is something lacking, wanting, to make the project a success."

"And it is?"

"The woman's willingness to pose."

"How strange you speak. Just a few moments ago you gave me to understand that you had secured her for your model."

"So she gave me to understand."

"Then why not hold her to her avowal?"

"It takes two to make a contract."

"Aren't you and her two?"

"Only in the abstract."

"You artists have a queer way of thinking and expressing yourselves."

"I am more than willing for the lady in question to pose for my Venus; aye, I am upon the point of



hysterics, fearing that she should continue to deny her avowed intention of posing for the picture she herself has suggested."

"Then hold her to your project."

"How can I?"

"By force of will power."

"It has utterly failed."

"By coercion."

"May as well assay to scale the rocky heights of Mount Popocatepetl."

"Have you tried persuasion?"

"Yes, but only in an indirect manner."

"Do you doubt the issue of a direct application?"

"If I did not I certainly would have tried it ere this."

"You do not believe that flattery would help your cause?"

"Decidedly no. Where a mirror is the daily evidence of supernatural beauty, flattery would have but an empty pressure toward the attainment of my heart."

"The case is not as bad as you would have me believe. There are a thousand ways that you may use in gaining the object of your aspiration."

"For instance?"

"Love."

"Love?"

"Yes. Let it be the kind that storms the heart



with consecutive assaults upon its defences; let it swoop upon the soul with its most searing fire; let it fasten itself upon the object of its attainment and suck the vitals of Resistance until love begets love, and feasts upon the spoils of Cupid's glowing spread."

Slowly, almost spasmodically, he rose to his feet and retreated half way across the room, his lips drawn until they showed but a white line across his face.

The woman, too, appeared to have undergone a radical change. Her bosom heaved tumultuously, her face was scarlet, whilst her eyes radiated with the gleam of passion, tense and strong.

"You—— you suggest——"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing," and she rose, walked over to the mantle where hung a four-by-ten-foot oil painting and pretended to be lost in the study of its well-depicted forest scenery.

And he, battling with the fire of aroused passion, swore beneath his breast as he watched the object of his cankerous thoughts and planned a conquest, the like of which was rampant when Christianity was unheard of and Civilization slept in Limbo.

There is an indefinable something between a man and a woman when their respective natures waken to the responsive blend of reciprocity. Paradoxical as it may appear to some people, there is such a



thing as an instantaneous feeling of reciprocal affection, brought to light by the silent touch of the hand or even the glance of an eye.

And Cyrus, standing there in the throes of his silent battle, knew that he was doomed to the slavery of this siren, knew that he was lost, so far as the salvation of his honor and respect were concerned. He felt the premonition of impending evil before her advent, he had heard the warning cry of his Conscience when his friends had gone to dine; aye, he knew at this precise moment that he was to drown in the engulfing waters of unholy fascination and surging infatuation.

"Woman!" he shouted in a strident voice as he sprang toward her in wild, accelerated haste.

"Help!" and she leaped upon a chair as if frightened at the fearful aspect and mien of the man with his knotted fists that shook as with the palsy.

For a moment there was silence, sepulchral eeriness as these two confronted each other. The woman upon the chair and the fire-lit man before her presented a lasting impression upon one's mind. Savage lust shone from the artist's eyes, a lioness-like admiration masked the woman's face as she looked down at the classical beauty of the man, now marred by the sting of biting and implacable passion.

"You frightened me, sir," revealing the most



beautiful set of pearly teeth ever seen in the mouth of a mortal woman.

He made no answer, but gritted his teeth as he faced the enchantress of his heart and soul.

"Are you trying my advice upon me?" laughing softly.

"You are mine, mine!" glaring at her with evil light in his dark orbs. "And by the eternal heavens!" and he tried first to mount the chair, and, being repulsed, to drag her from it with equal success.

"You appear most uncouth and rough in your strenuous wooing, sir."

"You drive me to the verge of desperation and of murder."

"Then you must love like a brute."

"Please forgive me," and he knelt on one knee and held his hands toward her in a most entreating manner. "Forgive me, dear."

"If you are real good," eyeing him lovingly, "you may pluck a delicious rose from your model's lips."

Upon the seat he leaped, the woman's waist he circled with one hand and her lips he devoured with a long, lingering kiss that burnt into his soul like liquid fire.

And, with a ringing oath that sounded like the report of a gun, the table flew against the wall, and,



in the center of the room there stood, divested of coat, vest and collar, the erstwhile missing Wilburt Cassaway, Jr.



## CHAPTER VII.

### UNMASKING A VILLAIN.

The lingering silence was heartrending. The man and woman on the chair, and the disheveled man in the centre of the room, were speechless. She clung to him in trembling fear and agitation; he held her to his bosom with giant arms as the cyclonic forces of his hot Southern blood ploughed through his veins like molten lava. Then, suddenly, his hands released the woman; with eyes that coruscated like the lamps of Hell and riveted upon the man who had worn the lamb's wool, he stepped from the chair and, imitating the noiseless tread of a mountain cat, proceeded to approach his enemy.

"Halt!" and a pistol glinted in the light as Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., jerked it from his hip pocket and leveled it at the approaching man possessed of seven devils.

The woman let a cry of terror escape her lips, then covered her eyes and swayed in horror.

"Another step and I fire!" and the pistol was



cocked for instant action; yet on, on, crept the avenging Nemesis like the mighty roll of a raging sea, the veins upon his knuckles black and blue, the ligaments of his muscles drawn to such a tension until they must have snapped in another moment.

"One!" and the finger on the trigger of death trembled with excitement.

"Two!" the voice was hoarse and husky, and the man, but three feet from the gun, said not a word, though his eyes, transformed to basilisks, did volumes.

"Three!"

"Murder! Help! Murder!" and the woman leaped from the chair and sprang to the side of Wilburt Cassaway, clutching the death-dealing weapon.

"Away!" and Cyrus flung her from the other's side with one sweep of his massive arm.

"Oh God! God!" she wailed as she fell on her knees and wrung her hands in agony.

The hot breath of Cyrus blew into the other's face, his eyes glared into the equally ferocious ones of his antagonist, yet the pistol pressed against his breast did not explode its missile of destruction.

"Shoot, you scoundrel!" and the clink of Cyrus'



teeth sounded through the room like the snapping jaws of a raging brute.

The deadly silence which followed was intense in its foreboding. For one full minute the men stood like graven images, their murderous eyes trying to read the other's thoughts.

Then, quicker than the flash of light Cyrus's hand caught the other's holding the pistol, there was a loud report, a terrible cry of terror from the woman, and then the smoke obscured the scene for several seconds and brought fresh actors to the scene in the shape of Mr. Cassaway, Sr., his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Scencio and myself.

"Cyrus!" called I, groping through the smoke, and in doing so I ran against something soft.

"Where are you, Mr. Bangs?" called the elder Cassaway.

"Here, over towards the window. There's somebody lying on the floor, and, in heaven's name, it's a woman! either dead or in a swoon."

He came to my side, and together we lifted an inanimate form in our arms.

The smoke disappeared through the window which Mrs. Scencio had the presence of mind to open, and in utter consternation we stared at the scene before us.

In the centre of the room stood Cyrus and Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., the latter holding a still



smoking pistol with one hand, whilst the other was fastened upon the throat of Cyrus who, with one hand over his antagonist's pistol and the other likewise gripping the other's throat, stood in silence as he faced his would-be murderer.

With a cry of agony Mrs. Cassaway fainted in the arms of Mrs. Scencio. And as Mr. Cassaway, Sr., discerned the posture of his son, he hastened me to the divan where we deposited the flaccid body of the mysterious woman, and strode up to Cyrus.

"What do you mean by this scene, sir?"

"It's none of your business," came the sharp retort.

"I'll have you arrested for attempted murder."

A sudden unexpected wrench, and the pistol left young Cassaway's hand and found itself in that of Cyrus'.

"If any arrest is to be made for attempted murder, I'm afraid that you will be compelled to have your own son arrested, seeing that it is his pistol that threatened me."

With a moan the strange woman came to, leaped to her feet and surveyed Cyrus from head to foot.

"Are you not hurt?" excitedly, as she came toward him in haste.

"No. But please go, go!"



I was somewhat surprised that she obeyed him so readily, but later found out why she did so.

As the door closed after her Cyrus spoke:

"This is your son, sir, the scoundrel who has betrayed my trust and friendship and alienated the affection of my wife."

"You, Wilburt?" and the poor old man gasped in consternation as he divided his eyes between his son's face and that of Mrs. Scencio's.

I hurried for a tumbler of water and revived Mrs. Cassaway, who, the moment she returned to consciousness, sprang to her husband and tried to cling to him for protection and consolation, but he would have none of her.

"Do not touch me!" brushing her from him.

"By heaven!" and the old gentleman looked for his cane. "I'll break every bone in your body, you whelp, if you do not treat your innocent wife with more respect."

"And if I catch you in these rooms again, I'll smother you with death, do you hear?"

"Cyrus!"

"And you," facing his wife, "you I'll divorce, yes, divorce to-day, this moment, you hussy!"

"Sir!" from the elder Cassaway.

"You, you'd interfere in my domestic business! Get out of here, for I've had enough of the Cassaway family for one day."



"Yet you haven't seen the last of this one."

"You!" clenching his fists, as the younger Cassaway strode up to him.

"Yes, me. Pose as a martyr, a saint, before the public, your wife and your friends, but don't try such tactics on me."

"What do you mean?"

"Just this: You're a nauseating cesspool of evil, a moral leper saturated with infidelity and all its accursed accoutrements. How about the kiss of raging fire? How about the woman who was here but a few minutes ago, your darling Miss Silence, eh?" sneering sardonically as he sprung this unexpected trap.

"I'll kill you!"

"Upon my invitation only," and the two men eyed each other like vultures.

"You who bear my name, I discard you, for you're viler than the concubines of Mephistophiles."

"For the Lord's sake, Cyrus, where's your manhood?"

"Shut up, Bangs, for you're but a silent witness, nothing more."

"I'll take her and treat her human," whereupon Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., started to advance toward the ostracised woman, only to be stopped by his father and Cyrus.







facts. For some time past you have been inattentive to your wife."

"You lie!"

Like bestial fiends they sprang for each other, and, in keeping them apart, my face came in contact with the flaying fists of my friend with such stunning force that I actually flew against the opposite wall.

"You're a brute!"

"And you're a scoundrel!"

"And you're enamored with the minx across the street. I saw her yesterday disrobe before you in your private office. What else happened I cannot say for the curtains were drawn. But I can guess."

"Damn you!"

"And you were preparing for a similar procedure when I, having, as I said before, ensconced myself beneath your friendly table, and thus interrupted your monumental sin."

"What's this?" asked Wilburt's father, approaching Cyrus.

"The man lies."

"And in denying this truth, this irrefragable truth, you——"

"Don't you call me a liar!"

"You prevaricate."

"Bangs!"



"Yes."

"Do me the favor, please, and call the young lady across the street," which I did with much reluctance and inward dismay.

"My son, if what you say is true, why is it that you stand before us in your shirtsleeves, not even with a collar and necktie?"

"That's my personal affair."

"And my wife's," cut in Cyrus.

"And I am going to apply for a divorce and alimony."

"By the gods! but you have nerve."

"It appears to me that I have the best of reasons for applying for one."

"Look here, children, this dispute has gone too far. Forget your little hates and reconcile yourselves to the irrevocable issue. You married for better or for worse, as the case may be. And, even though your bed be not a rose, bear it heroically, be ladies and gentlemen, and not educated savages, thirsting for revenge."

"You disinherited me because I married for love—at least I thought I did. You cut yourself loose from me, turned me out of your office, adrift, to live my life as I might see fit, not caring whether I went to the dogs or not. And this being so, why try to dictate at this late date?"

"I have no desire to dictate, boy. But I have



this little girl's welfare at heart. Leave these apartments; come, go with me and your wife and return to the place of your birth and take up your chair as head of the editorial staff on my paper and all will be forgiven. Will you do this, son?"

"No, sir, I will not."

"Wilburt, please do as your father begs of you," falling before him on her knees.

"You caused me all this trouble; it is to you that I am indebted for this scene, for the future downfall of my life and damnation of my soul."

"God's curse upon you, you fiend!" and with white lips and glassing eyes he forced the distracted woman to her feet and led her from the room.

"Leave this room!" commanded Cyrus.

"Not until I have faced you with the Woman in Purple."

"I'll throw you out!"

"Suppose you make the attempt."

"You perjure your soul when you swear that the Woman in Purple is, or has——"

"What?"

"Ah!" and his face lost its deadly color as the object of his thoughts stood in the threshold.

"You are hurt, sir?" with an intonation of keen anxiety in her voice as she hurried to the dumb-



founded Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., and her eyes, never leaving his face for a moment, fascinated him like the spell of a sorceress.

I whispered my instructions received from the woman into the ears of Cyrus and his wife, and without further to-do they left the room in silence.

"Does it pain as much as a minute ago?" she asked, still staring him in the eyes as she massaged his bare arm with her fingers.

"Not as much," and he laughed in a strange voice, though from where I stood I could see that he was rapidly falling asleep under the hypnotic influence of this strange enchantress.

"You must lie down; you want to, don't you?" leading him by the arm.

"Nice girly," I heard him mutter as he sprawled himself prone upon the couch.

"You were accused of a certain outrage, were you not?"

My ears were tense and strung as I listened for the answer, hardly above a whisper.

"Yes."

"You are very amorous?"

"Yes."

"You do not love your wife?"

"No."

"You possess a violent passion for another man's wife?"



"Yes."

"Mrs. Cyrus Scencio?"

"Yes."

"Why do you answer such compromising questions?"

"You make me."

"Do you know Everett Bangs?"

"Yes."

"What is he?"

"A scoundrel."

I jumped unconsciously at this strange, weird confession, revealing the man's soul and all its sinister designs.

"You hate him?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Mrs. Scencio knows."

"And Cyrus?"

"Is a fool."

"Why?"

"Because he's blind."

"Have you seen the Woman in Purple?"

"Yes."

"Do you like her?"

"No."

"And why not?"

"Because she's a minx and hussy."

"There!" and she gave him a resounding slap



on the face, leaving a scarlet tinge where she had struck him, and in another moment I was given the sign to vacate, which I at once did.

"Silence!" and she placed a finger to her lips and vanished via the elevator.

My curiosity was aroused as it never had been in the past. I wished to see his capers when he should come to himself, so I retreated toward the door leading to the sitting room, entered, and hid myself behind a friendly portiere.

It was not over ten minutes at the utmost when he awoke with a loud yawn, stretched his arms, and rose to a sitting posture.

"Well, I'll be snickered!" I heard him say with a sort of gasp, signalizing astonishment, as he got upon his feet.

"Where am I? Heavens! (softly.) This is Cyrus' apartment. And the Woman in Purple?"

He rubbed his eyes for a moment as he tried to refresh his mind.

"The fight!" he whispered. "The pistol (looking about him for the weapon). My father, wife and the Scencios, together with that sneaking scalawag Bangs. Drat that devil in purple anyway!" and he swore lustily as he crossed over to the door, opened it, peered down the deserted corridor, then closed the door and disappeared, leaving me to struggle with haunting and per-



plexing thoughts concerning the mysterious  
Woman in Purple.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### IN DEFENCE OF HONOR.

It was getting very close to the hour when respectable men and women ought to be abed; and I was just wondering what could have happened to the Scencios to keep them away from their home at this unholy hour, when the images of my thought entered the parlor.

"Be seated!" I heard my friend command in a stern voice.

"Cyrus, dear."

"One moment."

And before I was given an opportunity of making my presence known, I was forced to become a semi-unwilling eavesdropper. I say semi, for I had no desire to hear any more domestic woes, though I would have given the world to patch the broken breach and restore order out of chaos.

"I wish I were dead and buried!"

"Do not talk so solemnly, dear."

"Am I dear to you?"



"Yes," with a sob.

"I doubt it."

"What can I do to win back your confidence, Cyrus?"

"I am afraid you have lost it forever."

"Oh, do not say so."

"You have deceived me egregiously, most shamefully."

"I swear upon my honor that you are mistaken."

"You've lost your honor, provided, of course, that your sex possess such a delicate piece of mechanism."

"I swear by all that's holy, Cyrus."

"Do not perjure your soul unnecessarily."

"I wish that I had a child, one large enough to understand my woe."

"You'd corrupt it by your flagitious conduct. No, I do not want a child if you were to be its mother."

I have heard the sobbing of several women in my time, but never the like of which greeted my ears this night. It was low, it was racking upon one's soul, and it performed a miracle. At first the man left his seat and proceeded to pace to and fro in an endeavor to stifle from his ears the sound of the wild abandonment of his wife's sobbing; next he swore inarticulately as he smote



his fist upon the table, and then, wonder of wonders! he dropped on his knees, took her hands in his and spoke:

“Janice!”

“Yes.”

“Look at me.”

Through blinding tears she surveyed the metamorphosed face of her husband, a face streaked with sorrow and with pain.

“Do you remember the night we met? The stars were like great diamonds set in the vaulted dome of a Prussian blue firmament; the moon was full, and beaming from its coral bed as the whippoorwills crooned to their loving mates and pansies kissed the crystal dew that fell from Heaven’s crypt. The floating strains of a waltz rode like the mist the somnolent atmosphere; the sturdy oak beneath whose friendly branches we sat seemed to whisper Love’s vows to the eternal skies above. And the Great Spirit blessed us both as we kissed beneath His studded dome. When as I spoke to you of Love’s fond hope an onyx tear that stole to the corner of your eye revealed the fact, the sublime knowledge, that love had found its own, and I was happy. I basked my soul in the sweet manifestation as a lark does its wings in sunset beams of gold. I counted the seconds, the minutes, the hours and the days



when, before the altar of your fathers' faith, I should stand and receive you as my own and all, an integral and indissoluble part of my present and future existence. But, what an awakening!"\*

Entranced at the man's poetical speech, I sat as if carved out of stone, and listened for the reply from his wife.

"Don't, Cyrus, don't," and anew she sobbed the burdens of her heart and soul, wrung by the mournful cadence of her husband's voice and what his words implied.

"I am not a savage brute, a bestial fiend in the garb of man. I love a peaceful home, and worship the affection of a faithful wife. Will you be that to me? Can you?"

"Yes, Cyrus, I will."

"Will you renounce whatsoever affection you may still possess for the vapid tinsel of your set and go with me to the virgin dells of Nature and be an inspiration to my chosen profession, help me to forget this day, and what it has brought forth to the both of us?"

"Yes. I will go with you to the ends of this earth, anywhere, if you will but love and respect me as when first we were married."

"I ask no more. I have genius, and it one cannot suppress, though for a time it may be op-

\*With permission from "Betelguese."



pressed. Love me truly, confide to me your aches of heart and soul, and I will paint. I'll paint with the fire of genius and enthusiasm and make you the proudest woman on earth. \*I'll scale the almost inaccessible and insurmountable crags of Opposition; I'll storm the rock-infested walls of Prejudice and plant my standard upon the highest apex of Fame immortal and Work triumphant. I'll paint the primeval forests in all their virginal beauty; I'll put to canvas the lofty heights of snow-capped mountain peaks and paint above their towering heads the span-gled rifts of gray and silver clouds that float majestically to the shores of Paradise; I'll immortalize the work of the Great Spirit, and crown you queen of womanhood and empress of my realm.”\*

The woman was fascinated, paralyzed at this speech of her gifted husband whom she had lured to the yawning chasm of envy, hate and murder.

“Janice,” rising and drawing her to her feet.

“Cyrus! Cyrus!” and she clung to him as a babe does to its mother's breast.

“Will you renounce the world, the flesh and the devil and follow me?”

“I will.”

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\*With permission from “Betelguese.”



\*“Will you be to me an inspiratory help? If you will, I’ll blast from my memory the cankering thoughts of Wilburt Cassaway, and lose myself in the crystal folds of your life and the joy of my profession. I’ll make the world ring with the echo of your husband’s name; I’ll paint a laughing sea that throws a salutation to the empyreal heights of Heaven, and hang it in the Hall of Fame; I’ll reproduce the Alpine heights of cold and bleak that seem to pierce the very dome of sky, and lay it as a trophy at your feet; I’ll rake the diamond stars from the heavens, place them as a tiara upon your alabaster brow and be your slave, if you’ll but be my queen.\* I’ll dig, I’ll grovel in the garbage cans of the rich and the hovels of the poor, ere you, the image of the Almighty, should be forced to purvey the fruits of flesh as a means of subsistence.”

“Cyrus, I love you! I love you!” and she smothered his face with kisses. “I swear,” falling on her knees and holding her hands above her head, “I swear that I will be what you have asked of me; I swear that I will be like the lily in the field, an undefiled receptacle of purity, love and affection.”

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\*With permission from “Betelguese.”



"I want no more, dear," raising her to her feet and kissing her quivering lips. "And now, love, let us blot from our individual memory the lingering image of the past, that past dating from the time of our return from our honeymoon until to-day. And now, good night," and with an affectionate embrace he led her to the door communicating with the bedroom, then returned to his seat, turned the lights out and, with lighted pipe, lost himself in the profundity of his reverie.

The terrible earnestness of his words had enthralled me, had sapped the vitality of my limbs and left me in a trance of admiration and of monumental fear. I say fear, for, even as the soul-drawn words left his lips, I thought of what should happen if, after this crucial ordeal, his trust should again be outraged by the sardonic connivance of a man who had feasted on the spoils of virtue, of friendship and of trust. I feared to leave my seat. I trembled at the prospect of encountering my friend in the nocturnal quietness of his room, so I sat in solitary stillness and rehearsed the day's heartrending events.

Just when I fell asleep I do not remember. But I awoke about 5 A. M. and found the room deserted.

The sun had shoved its giant hands through the opaque blanket of the East like a god that



left his throne in search of his queen; the fragrant perfume of this August morning wooed my senses with its potent wand, and I, succumbing to its subtle influence, hastened from the room and soon was making my way to a nearby park, where the robins and squirrels made merry with the kissing rays of a loving sun.

A good shower-bath about 9 A. M. refreshed me wonderfully, and after enjoying a most palatable breakfast, I repaired to my office and sought to bury myself in my work, but without avail. There was a tucking at my heart, an indefinable something kept spurring me to leave and see how matters fared with my artist friend. And it is well that I listened to the mysterious impulse, for had I not I should have missed the sublimest spectacle ever enacted between a husband and an infatuated siren.

Cyrus and I had been talking for about fifteen minutes when we were interrupted by the hall-boy with:

"A lady to see you, Mr. Scencio," and suspecting the identity of the visitor, I excused myself for a moment and left, only to re-enter by way of the dining room and ensconce myself behind the portieres dividing the large spacious parlor.

"Shall I show the lady in?" asked the lad.

"Tell her that I am out."



"Oh, but you are in, sir," and my lady Silence entered, roseate with happy smiles and bright sparkling eyes; and the lad, blessing the woman, who gave him a crisp dollar note, bowed himself out and closed the door after him.

"What do you want?" brusquely from the man, as he surveyed the intruding woman with scorn.

"Sir!" haughtily, her golden head towering above her shoulders like that of Psyche as she stared at the dumbfounded man before her.

"How dare you intrude, and unsolicited, too?"

"Well, well, well!" laughing low and musically. "First I am invited, and then asked how I dare to intrude!"

"Invited?" in consternation.

"Why, of course, else why should I be here?"

"And who in the name of the six devils invited you, eh?" rising and glaring at the woman with increasing wrath.

"Are you in your senses, sir?"

"Never was saner than at this moment."

"Your actions, though, would have me believe otherwise. May I take a seat?"

Like a catapult the answer shot from his lips:

"No!"

A bright tinge of carmine mantled her cheeks as she spoke:

"No such outrage has been handed me by a



gentleman since my stay in New York."

"You're a——"

"Lady," she interposed, eyeing him steadily and unflinchingly.

"A personified——"

"Lady," and she came toward him with her basilisk-like orbs boring into his like thunderbolts from above.

"A —lady," he murmured, bewildered at the woman's intonation, her mien and her terrible cat-like crouch.

"Good! Splendid!" and she invited herself to a seat and began to play with the rubies attached to her purse. And he, struck dumb and speechless by her superb audacity and manifestation of superiority of nerve and coolness, wished himself buried in the abyss of oblivion.

"Why was I invited?"

"You?" incredulously.

"Yes, me."

"By whom?"

"Yourself, sir."

"Eh?" and he staggered back in blank amazement.

"Did you not write me to call this forenoon at 11.15 A. M. sharp?"

"By heaven! No!"

"And yet you sent me a note to this effect."



"What!" he shouted, approaching the woman in baffled perplexity.

"You sent me a tender billet-doux by the lad who announced my entrance."

"You must be dreaming."

"As my veracity is questioned, I am compelled to call the boy in my defense," whereupon she rose and left the room, only to return in a moment with the boy.

"Shut the door!" commanded Cyrus.

"Now, son," as he stood between the man and the woman, "did you see me early this morning, about 8.30 A. M.?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And why?"

"I had a note to deliver to you from Mrs. Scencio."

"You lie!" clenching his fists as he bounced upon the frightened lad.

"You appear to have an ungovernable temper, on a parallel with the ocular demonstration of your love."

He ground his teeth in simon rage as his convulsed fists itched for a display of brute force and strength.

"Who gave you the note, dear?" patting his cheeks affectionately.

"Mrs. Scencio."



His face went white as death, his breath came in short, spastic gasps as he glared at the woman and boy.

"Could you identify the note if you saw it again?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Is this it?" producing a small envelope from her purse.

"Yes."

A startled cry escaped the woman and pierced the atmosphere as Cyrus leaped to where the woman half-knelt and tore the note from her hands.

"By the gods! it's my stationery!" he exclaimed as he examined the envelope and paper.

"And what does the note say?"

"A damnable lie," crunching it in his fist.

"Cyrus——"

"Mr. Scencio, if you please."

Majestically she rose and riveted her seductive eyes upon those of the man who battled anew in the throes of reascending passion and soul-destroying lust.

"Cyrus," eyeing him steadfastly, "give the lad a dollar."

I perceived the utter helplessness of him as he obeyed her without a protest; then, when the lad



had disappeared, she turned the key in the lock and confronted her captive.

“What do you mean by your conduct?”

“Leave me, please,” slowly receding toward the mantle as she advanced, her heart a seething cauldron of blind and implacable anger that enhanced her beauty until even I, behind the portieres, felt the sweat ooze from my pores as the devilish longings, concocted by the manipulation of an engendered Mephistopheles in the person of this mysterious woman, spun my thoughts in the devastating cesspool of putrid longings, hopes and joys.

“You sent for me, and why?”

“I—did—not.”

“You kissed me yesterday with a fire that has burned its way into my very soul.”

“You drove me to the belching abyss of Hell’s pampered loves that feast upon the spread of lust and decayed virtue.

“You sucked the vitals of my heart and roused my slumbering soul to the knowledge of what love begets.

“And you slew the honor of my once noble soul and dragged it to the gutter of vice cankering and crime-polluted.

“You foisted upon my heart a desire that it never knew before, and you must satisfy it.”



"I will not," and he stamped his foot in rage and despair.

"I'll force you; and, whilst doing so, I'll make of you what blind Destiny willed. I'll drag you from your insane prejudice; I'll force you to glue your eyes upon a figure that will stab your soul with piercing desires. Yes, you!" advancing a step and pointing her wax-like arm at him. "I'll make you paint it, every curve, every line, and make of you Fame's rarest jewel, the world's immortal artist," and as she made to take hold of his hand, he leaped upon the table and stood erect, though his limbs shook as if swayed by an earthquake.

"I fear you and I don't."

"I love you with a passion that could slay."

"And I despise you."

"I'll battle with your senses and make you slave to my every whim and fancy."

"And I will perish in the battle for the honor of my soul and the virtue of my wife!"

"Cyrus Scencio, you're a fool! Here," taking a small visiting card from her purse and laying it on the table, "go to this address some day and see whom you may find," and the next moment she was gone, as Cyrus, sapped of his fighting strength, sank limp and flaccid to the table, a momentary wreck of his once robust manhood.



## CHAPTER IX.

### WE RIDE IN "BLACK MARIA."

I was speechless. My mind was in a chaos of riot and disorder, my heart heavy with the loadstone of doubt and of fear, for the manner in which the woman fired her parting shot and the nature of the missile, was enough to drive the assaulted man to desperation and to murder.

"Cyrus!" and I hastened to the table and led him to a chair.

"Were you a spectator to the cyclone, Et'?"

"I know all, friend, and I'm going to help you."

"I'm nearly insane, Et', I cannot think connectedly nor succinctly."

"Let me see the card with the address."

"There it is," pointing to the table.

The house in question I could locate, but of it I knew absolutely nothing.

"Have you the note that the woman gave you?"

"Yes," opening his clenched fist.

"The note, Cyrus, asks for an appointment at



11.15 A. M. and closes with 'Love and many kisses.' It is not in your handwriting, though, and the hand that wrote the note did not address the envelope."

"No?"

"No, friend. Did you not recognize the handwriting of the note?"

"Let me see it, please."

For several minutes he studied it, but vouchsafed no immediate reply; and I, growing impatient at his delay, forced the issue by asking:

"Is it not your wife's?"

"Et'!"

"No offence, friend. I am satisfied after having witnessed the scene between you two last night that from henceforth you may place implicit confidence in her. But the handwriting must be accounted for. Is it your wife's?"

"Yes."

"And that on the envelope is whose?"

"Not my wife's?"

"God forbid!"

"Then whose is it?"

"Cassaway's."

The silence grew into seconds and the seconds into minutes, yet the man moved not a muscle nor spoke a word, simply sat in his chair, overcome at this unlooked-for intelligence.



I knew the writing instantly, yet I was baffled as to how it came to be on the envelope containing the note. And as I was pondering over this dilemma, the wife of Cyrus entered.

"Has anything happened?" anxiously of me as she hastened to the side of her husband.

"Yes and no."

"How strangely you speak, Mr. Bangs."

"A little unpleasantness has taken place, due to the strange, almost mysterious issue of your little note," and I watched her face furtively as I spoke for any signs of danger.

"My note, to whom?"

"It starts 'Dear Friend' and ends with 'Love and many kisses,' but no address nor signature is given."

"Let me see it."

Taking the note from the envelope I handed it to her and waited in silence for her to declare herself.

"And this innocent missive has caused you and Cyrus to be thrown into a melancholy mood? How ridiculous!" and she laughed merrily as she patted her husband's cheeks, all the while making a mock face of anger at me, who thanked High Heaven that no near-compromising issue was on hand to stir up fresh trouble between these two.



"I wrote this note and gave it to one of the hall-boys with the instruction to deliver it in person to the addressed."

"And who was the addressed?" asked Cyrus.

"Mrs. Cassaway," unconsciously blushing to the roots of her hair.

"But you failed to keep your appointment."

"I know, Cyrus. There was a fire on Fourth avenue, the cars became stalled, and I was unavoidably detained. I 'phoned her, though, changing the hour of appointment from 11.15 A. M. to 12.30 P. M."

"Where did you 'phone her?"

"At her father-in-law's residence."

"Did she answer the 'phone?"

"Yes, and I expect her here at any moment."

"Here's the envelope that contained your note, Mrs. Scencio," handing her same.

"Why," and she eyed me narrowly for a moment, "this is not my handwriting."

"Whose is it?"

"I do not know. Who is Miss Silence?"

"The Lady in Purple."

"And it is she who received my note?"

"She did, and came here as per appointment."

"Call the lad to whom you gave your note, Janice."



In a moment the boy stood before us, frightened at the sternness of my friend's face.

"Who gave you this note?" showing him the envelope.

"Mrs. Scencio, sir."

"Did you deliver it immediately?"

"Not immediately, sir."

"Why not?"

"I heard a call from the suite across the hall, so I laid the note on the table there and answered the bell."

"And who was it that called?"

"Mr. Cassaway."

"Cassaway!" he shouted at the frightened lad in a rasping voice.

"Yes, sir," shrinking away from the irate man.

"And what did he want?"

"A glass of whiskey."

"And you got it for him before delivering the note?"

"Yes, sir. He has been very kind to me, and I wished to be as obliging as possible. I informed him, though, that he would have to wait a few minutes as I had to deliver a message. He told me to leave my message on the table and get his whiskey at once, saying that it could wait; whereupon I informed him that I had left it lying on



the table here, left him and hastened for his whiskey."

"And the letter?"

"I delivered it to the addressed."

"Had you read the address when you first received it from my wife?"

"No, sir."

"That will do;" whereupon the boy made haste to vacate, fearing the frowning face of his interlocutor.

Mrs. Cassaway appeared promptly at 12.30 P. M., and incidentally identified the handwriting on the envelope as that of her husband's. And there the matter ended for the time being.

Women have a wonderful way of "making up." One day they may be the worst of enemies and call each other "cat," "hussy," and every other superlative appellation that they can think of; the next day there is a meeting, then a kissing performance, with a few tears to make things melodramatic, and all is forgiven and forgotten, but not so with the harder sex. All of you have either heard or read of a man possessing a "grudge," who kept his tongue for a number of months or years, only at a most unlooked-for moment to hurl his exploding bomb into his enemy's camp. And knowing this to be a fact, I figured



on the possible outcome of a future meeting between Cyrus and young Cassaway.

True to his avowal, Cyrus broke up his establishment that same day and moved to the country, on a beautiful farm on the Hudson River, near Troy, where in the months that followed he forgot his past sorrows in the daily application of his work.

I knew, of course, that the ordeal was most trying for his wife, that she missed her host of friends and mourned the loss of society's spangled tinsel. Hence I made it a rule to visit them every Wednesday and Sunday. And in all of my many excursions my friend never alluded to either of the Cassaways.

The Woman in Purple I saw on very rare occasions; probably between the date of Cyrus' departure and the day preceding Thanksgiving I saw her not more than four times, and then only from my apartments.

Young Cassaway was living a hermit's life in the same suite once occupied by the Scencios. Just why the change I could not say. Probably it reminded him of certain things he was fain to forget; probably the man had some sinister design—who knows?

Neither his father nor his wife had seen him since that fatal day in August; neither had I, for



that matter, nor would I have been cognizant of his close proximity to my quarters had it not been for the lad who had been used as a cat's-paw by him.

The snow was falling lightly, the air was just cool enough not to be uncomfortable; and, as I entered my office building and took the elevator, I envied the thought of my friend's dinner of turkey and cranberry sauce away up there on the banks of the Hudson. Simultaneously I be-thought myself of the Cassaways, and speculated whether at to-day's dinner the wandering sheep in the person of young Cassaway would elect to return to his father's fold. And as I was reading the morning paper and smoking a most delicious Havana, the door of my sanctum flew open and Cyrus Scencio entered.

His brows were wrinkled, the lines of his mouth were puckered into an ugly frown, and his eyes, !Heavens! they looked murder at me, me, his friend!

"Get your coat and hat on and follow!"

"But——" I began to remonstrate, when he cut me short with:

"Satan!" and he stamped his foot on the floor and swore profusely.

"One moment and I'll be with you," and I hastened into my overcoat as quickly as possible, and



announced my readiness by drawing on my gloves.

However, he spoke not a word, not one, until the Ninth avenue L had dropped us at the 59th street station and we had descended to the street below.

"Do you see this thing?" shoving a huge 48-calibre revolver into my startled face.

"Yes, but in heaven's name, Cyrus——"

"No heaven about this business, Et', but hell, black hell, whither Wilburt Cassaway is bound for in about five minutes by the fastest express known to science—a ball of lead."

"I'll go no farther."

"Oh, yes, you will. And after it's all over you'll be one of the jurors to send me to the electric chair, provided, of course, that I am frustrated in my premeditated designs."

"Which are?" I gasped in awe.

"To kill my wife, her paramour, and yours truly."

"Come in here," and I proceeded to drag him to a nearby saloon, when he flatly refused with dogged determination.

"I'll call that officer and have you arrested if you don't."

"What do you want of me?" as he started toward the saloon.



"I want you to take a large dose of brandy."

"That's so. How clever of you, Et'. Now I should not have thought of such a thing as a nerve steadier," whereupon we entered and ordered a round of brandy apiece.

Come, now, let us be going, for I have work to accomplish," and he made to leave, when I stayed him.

My object was to get him drunk, aye, paralyzed, if possible, then take him to a hotel, put him to bed and look up his wife.

"I want another drink, Cyrus."

"You do, eh?" eyeing me suspiciously. "That's strange. Never knew you to use intoxicating drinks before. What's happened?"

"You know," pouring out a regular toper's drink—even with the rim of the glass—and shoving it toward him, "that a man in my profession needs an occasional stimulant, something to steady his nerves."

"Well, here's looking!" whereupon he lifted the glass to his lips and drank, whilst I poured the contents of mine into the trough before the bar.

"Come over to this table for a moment before we leave, for I wish to ask a question or two of vital importance."

"You're a good fellow, Et', if you are an ass



when woman is concerned," and I noticed that his voice was growing thick, and his gait was losing its characteristic erectness. Would I succeed? Oh, how I prayed that I should, for I was in mortal dread of the all-impending issue.

"Waiter, two Canadian Clubs!" I called at that functionary, and then, "Now, chum and brother, what brought you away from your customary haunts?"

"Et', I've been a fool, a fool!"

"Go ahead," and I shoved the whiskey toward him and watched him like a hawk.

"I can't find my wife. She went to town yesterday to buy several articles for our Thanksgiving spread, and has failed to return. And this is the day of thanks!" and I noted the tears steal to his dark eyes as he thus bethought himself of what he had to give thanks for.

"Here's health, peace and fame!" and I lifted high the sparkling glass of whiskey, and as he drained his in a choking gulp, I tossed mine over my shoulder and thanked heaven that my friend was getting drunk. Yet in another moment we were mixed up in about as ugly a broil as one could possibly wish to see.

I always act upon an impulse, even is this so when defending a client at court, and in the saloon I proved myself no exception to this procliv-



ity. The thought occurred to me to fling the befuddling drink over my shoulders just as Cyrus should raise his to his lips. I did so and soused a man behind me.

"What do you mean?" asked the injured individual as he sprang to his feet and shoved a huge callous fist under my very nose.

"Do you see this, stranger?" and as I looked I caught the gleam of my friend's revolver. "It will speak if you so much as touch my chum's hair."

"Shoot, then!"

For a moment I thought that a sledgehammer had felled me. The barroom seemed on end and doing a wild bacchanalian dance, then the vapor left my senses, and I saw, aye, I saw my friend Cyrus and the stranger locked in a terrible embrace; they swayed from side to side like carnal fiends unleashed. And in the saloon, as the chairs and tables flew helter-skelter, bedlam broke loose. Friends of the stranger pounced upon me and meddled with the features of my face. And Cyrus, in his half-drunken state, was a raging brute of unimaginable strength and ferocity. The man was huge and powerful, much larger than my friend, but he lacked the demoniacal fury that had been rampant in my friend's soul for the last



ten or twelve hours, and now gloated at this unexpected outlet of his pent-up feelings.

Against the wall the man was hurled with the violence of a projectile; at Cyrus he sprang, his yellow teeth gleaming like the fangs of an enraged boar, and the bystanders, becoming terrorized at this gladiatorial display of herculean strength, forgot me in the fascination of the gruelling combat.

Their sinuous arms were interlocked; in hellish rage they chewed their mustaches and fought for a wrestler's strangle-hold; then, far quicker than the eye of man could follow, the man spun around like a top, a frightful curse ravaged the atmosphere and shook the very rafters of the rookery as Cyrus caught his foe between his arms and squeezed, squeezed, until the spectators heard three consecutive reports, caused by the snapping of the man's ribs.

And it was his intention to kill the man, which was only frustrated by the belated appearance of the guardians of the peace, gentlemen who are invariably absent at a most critical moment, and strangely make an appearance after the damage has been done.

Be this as it may, I blessed them for the first time in my life, though I cursed them most round-



ly the next moment as they proceeded to club the black, curly head of my savage friend.

His victim had swooned; and an ambulance hurried him to the Flower Hospital, whilst a dozen "Black Marias" carted Cyrus, myself and the spectators to the nearest police station, where, after the usual preliminary proceedings, our names were entered, Cyrus' and mine fictitious ones, and bail fixed, according to the charges made.

Fortunately I happened to have two-thirds of the necessary amount, \$200 in my case, helped myself to what I found in my friend's pockets, and so sallied forth for my then best friend—the wallet locked in the small safe at my office.

I would extricate my friend from his ignominious incarceration amongst hoodlums, roysterers and panhandlers, let the bail go in default of non-appearance, and so forget the incident. I was in duty bound to do so, for had I not enticed a man to drink, a friend of mine who knew not the taste of alcoholic beverages?

Yes, I would get him out, but not before four or five A. M. Let him sober up, let him have several hours' meditation, and probably his present murderous impulse will have left his heart and open his eyes to the error of his premeditated rampage of simon lust for murder.



## CHAPTER X.

### BESTED.

The corridor was unusually dark, and it was with great difficulty that I found my way to the door that I knew led to the bedchamber once occupied by the Scencios. It was midnight. The hours intervening between the time of my release from the police station and midnight were consumed at my office, at a doctor's who decorated my face with varying sundry decorations to hide the ugly bruises, and my residence, where I awaited the answers to several telegrams from Troy. And when the news finally reached me by wire that to all intents and purposes the wife of Cyrus had disappeared from the ken of the living, for she had not been seen for forty-eight hours, and the messenger boys who had visited the farm reported the total absence of even the husband—I left my rooms, replenished the inner man, and set in motion the machinery of my detective department.



For several minutes I stood before the door and listened with my ear close to the keyhole, but heard nothing, absolutely no sound. What could I do? What should I do?

Reluctantly I left the corridor, walked down the steps, as I did not wish to have my presence known to even the elevator boy, and soon was out in the crisp night air again, a worsted amateur detective. But I would succeed. I'd haunt the immediate vicinity, though the thermometer should drop to zero and the night grow into day, but that I would see my quarry; always provided, of course, that Cyrus and I were not in error.

Up and down the opposite street I paced in the frosty air, my chattering jaws rattling with the stinging cold and icicles forming upon my beard, yet the self-imposed task I would not nor could not shirk, for I was Cyrus' sworn hyperaspist for friendship and for honor's sake. I hated the man who had robbed my friend of the affection of his wife; I hated him for countless other reasons of my own, in particular his attempted alienation of my chum's confidence and respect for his young manhood's first, and, for that matter, only friend.

Down the furthestest corner of the street appeared two vacillating lights; they were coming toward me, and in the excitement of my expectancy the chattering of my teeth subsided.



It was a closed carriage, and desiring to get as good a view of its occupants as possible, I stationed myself directly in front of No. 16 and awaited with eager breath the fast approaching horses.

"Thanks!" and the Woman in Purple tossed the frozen driver a bright coin (I think it was a gold piece), and then caught sight of me and recognized me instantly.

"Miss Silence," and I raised my hat despite the fearful cold as I stepped toward her.

"Sir!" freezingly, as she surveyed me with well-assumed contempt.

"Pardon me, miss, but I have most distressing news, and thought that it might just be possible that you could be of most valuable assistance."

"You are Everett Bangs, the lawyer?"

"Yes."

"And what is the nature of your distressing news that you should come to me for assistance?"

"It concerns a friend of mine, Cyrus Scencio, an artist," chuckling to myself as I thought of what she would be to him if he were but willing.

"Won't you come up to my apartments? We cannot remain here, you know, and talk till dawn."

"If you please," and I laughed again into my beard as she led the way, wondering the while how I should escape the battery of her queries



when once I should be in her rooms without compromising myself, and worming the desired knowledge from her secret soul.

"One moment, please," and she excused herself and disappeared in an adjoining room, leaving me standing in the centre of the sitting room.

The room was warm, it felt most comfortable after having been out in the blistering cold for several hours; and, as I was speculating whether I ought to help myself to a seat or not, the woman in purple—no, she was dressed in a most bewitching evening gown of green—entered.

"I have not seen you for nearly four months," deprecatingly, though assimulated.

"No. My spare time I devoted to my friend on a farm up on the majestic Hudson."

"Where he devoted his time to painting wood-lawn scenery?"

"Yes. And some of them are superb."

"I hope that they are better than his Venus at the National Academy of Fine Arts."

"Which won the highest reward."

"And is that a criterion to go by? Does it represent America's standard of art?"

"I cannot answer that for you because I am but a layman in such things."

"Your friend is a born genius."

"Thanks. I know that he will appreciate your



compliment, for, undoubtedly, you understand real art when you see it."

"How adroitly you put your encomiums, Mr. Bangs."

"And are you interested in my distressing news?"

"Inasmuch as your young Adonis is concerned? Yes."

"Listen," moving my chair closer to her and speaking in a lowered voice. "He is at this precise moment in jail, locked up in a dirty police station," and I recounted to her our disastrous experience, exhibiting my decorated face and showing to as good advantage as possible the prowess of my young David.

No exclamation escaped her lips as I, the self-styled astute lawyer, had expected. Instead, she kept her lips closed and awaited further intelligence.

"You are not interested?" I asked aggrievedly.

"Street brawls do not arouse my admiration, sir."

I felt like cursing at this well-parried thrust of her tongue. And as such was denied me, being in the presence of a lady, I did the next best thing and pulled the back of my hair with ven-

"Probably you are not aware of the fact that the Cassaways are not living together?"



"No."

"And that young Cassaway is inhabiting the suite once occupied by the Scencios?"

"No."

Baffled at every move and turn, I swore beneath my breath and racked my thoughts anew for fresh material.

"Do you like to pose?"

"As I never tried the experiment, I feel a delicacy in articulating."

"Why, I thought that Cyrus gave me to understand that you were the noted model who had posed for the world's greatest painters and sculptors, Greek figures being your specialty."

"Did you?"

"Yes."

"How remarkable. And yet I should so like to pose for some really great painter and have my name handed down to posterity in connection with his subject and his immortal fame.

"And your name?"

"Countess von——"

She stopped right at this most critical moment, this all-pervading moment, when I had hoped to glean her name and identity.

"Countess von What?"

"Silence."



"Your shrouded mystery drives away my religion."

"And makes you long to swear?"

"Something akin to it, if you will pardon this admission."

"You've been a good boy so far, though abnormally inquisitive, even for a lawyer. Suppose now, that I informed you that I am a descendant of one of the oldest houses in Europe, say, for instance, Hungary, that I have been married, and that my age—most unforgivable sin in your American women—is thirty-two. Then what?"

"Nothing more remains save the disclosure of your name."

"Which is Silence."

"Like mine of Jones."

"Do you question my honor?"

"No, I'll admit that it is none of my business."

"You'll also admit that I am more than passingly beautiful?"

"Eh?" half rising.

"That you would barter your very soul for the possession of a woman of my physical attributes, that at this very moment, this precious moment you would bask your bachelor heart in the affections and love of the Lady in Purple?"

The perspiration on my brow was cold as the air without; the thumping of my heart sounded



like a trip-hammer working overtime as I stood, a transformed imbecile, subject to the whims and fancies of this most bewitching enchantress in green.

“Lie there!”

It was a stern command. I tried to walk toward the door and make a hasty exit, yet my legs, confound them! marched the opposite direction to that I wished and prayed them to take. And I fought a battle, I fought in my helpless condition the battle of my life. Against the spell of this modern Hecate I struggled with all the strength of my will power, with all the force of my terror-stricken soul, only in the end to bow my will in silent and subconscious submission.

“How soft are your hands!” I heard her murmur as she proceeded to stroke them. “And you are worried, too.”

“Yes,” I heard myself answer, though why I did so I could not then account.

“You were not spying my movements?”

“No.”

“And yet you were on the alert for somebody?”

“Yes.”

“Who?”

Pangs of white-heated hue seemed to dig into my very vitals and drag from me each unwilling response.



"Cassaway."

"Why?"

"For information."

"About whom?"

"Scencio's wife."

"Where is she?"

"I do not know."

"Does Cyrus?"

"No."

"Does Cassaway?"

"I think so."

"Have you an idea as to her present whereabouts?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe that you could name with any accuracy the place where she is hid?"

"Probably."

"Where?"

"Across the street."

"In Cassaway's apartments?"

"Yes."

"What do you think of the Woman in Purple?"

Convulsive chills shook my entire body at this unlooked-for query, yet the answer, like the rest, was drawn from my unwilling lips by the art of this avowed sorceress.

"That she's a siren."

"And lured your friend from moral rectitude?"



"And lured him to his downfall."

"You are very candid."

"I am."

"And Cyrus, what thinks he of me? Do you believe within your secret soul that the man is vulnerable? Do you believe that I could subjugate him to my will, make him slave to my love and affection?"

"I do."

"Would you help me to the triumph of my purpose?"

"I would not."

"Would you oppose my wish?"

"I would."

"And why?"

"For the honor of his name and that of his wife."

"His wife?"

"Yes."

"She is not worthy his love; she is no inspiratory help to him; she will drag him to the ditch, to the madhouse and to an early grave."

"And you to the bowels of hell."

I perceived the carmine mantle her cheeks and eyes glare at me with impotent fury; I felt that murder ravaged her thoughts, her soul, and trembled at what might be my lot if help did not reach me in another moment.



"What am I?" circling my wrists with fingers that were hot as fire with demoniacal venom.

"A—witch," I spurted, a babe in the toils of this creature that had so completely bested me.

"You fear me, and it is well that you do. My mind is capable of subordinating you to my every whim and fancy. I can enslave you, make of your plastic mind a puppet to my will, and the first result of my real experiment you know. I cannot enthrall the god-like spirit of your chum Cyrus; I cannot bring him under my magnetic influence, for when a positive and negative force meets there is bound to be more or less friction. The electrical forces of his nature equal mine. The magnetic crystals in his brain are even more potent than mine and only lack proper development. But I'll succeed, nevertheless, and through your agency. I am fully determined to save him from the impending evil which looms before him in my perspective like a falling avalanche of earth and stone from the heights of a mountain. His dormant genius I will spur to action, to active life, and make him paint as he never has done before. I'll pose for him in all the sublime nudity of my loveliness, and eat my way into his heart and soul with assumed opposition and with devouring fervor. And you will be the agency of my will, the potent factor



used to bring to the point of materialization my set purpose and desire."

Then came silence; the stillness of the tomb reigned supreme for, it seemed to me, hours; the face of the woman was dissolving into a greenish-like vapor, and finally appeared to float toward the ceiling and disappear completely from my view as I, chained in the lethargic spell of some conjured force, lost my senses in the mantle of oblivion.

Just what took place to me that night in the woman's eerie apartments is veiled in more or less mystery. I can only state with any show of lucidness the incidents occurring from the time when a voice, to me thunderous in its intonation, addressed me with a ringing command:

"Wake up!"

"By my halidom!" and I thought that I was the Prince of Wales in Shakespeare's play *Henry IV.* and that I was addressing Falstaff. "That villainous abominable misleader of youth, Falstaff, that old white-bearded Satan."

Shakespeare was my hobby—each and every one of us has one—and I must have been dreaming of the first part of *Henry IV.*, going through the first act and awakening at the strange command when rehearsing the fourth scene in Act II.

"I am here," said a musical voice, so different



from the one that had addressed me so brusquely but a moment ago. And instantly I turned around and looked and stared, did I, in consternation, and shook with the palsy of suffocating passion, for before me, not five feet away, stood the fairest vision, in the shape of the mysterious woman, that I have as yet seen. The symmetrical outlines of her glowing flesh, roseate with the flush of life, showed clear and distinct from beneath a softly clinging Oriental costume of a transparent gauze-like fabric, and I, caught in the vise-like snare of the most potent weapon of Satan,—, lost my honor and respect as I felt a technical leper to the wiles of this woman so terribly tempting and fascinating.

“Would you have me?”

“Yes,” I whispered, the sweat leaving me in huge, cold drops.

“And would you cherish me? Love me until your bones should be shoveled out of sight?”

“I will,” and I started toward her, my object being to crush her to my mad bosom, when I was stayed by:

“What do you see?”

“A madly ravishing figure of a woman, whose semi-nudity drives me to the point of frenzied hope and love.”

“Are you morally certain?”



“Yes. I’ll swear it.”

“And perjure your soul.”

“Never! I see you; I even feel the warm heat of your body, the tingling blood in your veins and arteries——”

“If this is so, then who is this at your right?”

I spun around, and, with a cry of rage and despair, made a sudden advance upon the double of the mysterious woman, then halted spasmodically, stared at the immovable figure in its gauzy drapery, then at the figure in green, and, with a cry of terror, snatched my hat and coat and fled the Sodomitical apartments of conjured shapes and fancies.



## CHAPTER XI.

### REBUFFED.

I am not addicted to the use of profane language, but upon my entrance to the world without I used the language of the accursed. I tore my hair in frenzy, in addling rage I glared at the sun high in the heavens as I made my way to the drug store at the corner to see what hour of the day it might be. And when I noticed the time, 9. 10 A. M. I consigned the Woman in Purple to the shades of Hades and made my way to my office where I at once made the wire hum with my frantic call for a certain police station.

What must Cyrus think of me who had lured him to a brothel shop, got him drunk, took his money and left him to muse over the strange disappearance of his chum?

I was furious. I could not go in person, for then I should be haled before a magistrate and made to answer to the charge of drunkenness and disorderly conduct.



"Hello!" came over the 'phone.

"Hello!" I shouted, "is this the police station?"

"Yes."

"You have a gentleman by name of James Var-muchii locked up for assault and battery?"

"One moment."

Then after a lapse of thirty seconds: "No. His name, though, is on the blotter, together with sixteen others. But he is not here."

"What!" I shouted.

"No, sir. But who are you?"

"A lawyer," and I gave him my correct name and address.

"The gentleman in question was bailed out last night, or to be more specific, this A. M., about three o'clock, by a woman unknown."

"A woman?"

"Yes."

"Can you describe her?"

"One moment."

First I heard the distinct conversation between two men, then a clear voice addressed me:

"Hello!"

"Hello!"

"The woman was dressed in purple."

The receiver dropped from my hands and I staggered to the nearest chair, where, helpless



and stunned, I sat for at least twenty minutes, overcome at this sudden shock.

"The Woman in Purple!" I exclaimed. "How in the name of sanity did she find out the number of the police station; and when did she go?"

Ostensibly I had gone to get the necessary amount of his bail (\$500), ostensibly I had been trapped and held a prisoner whilst my captor wormed from me the secret of my soul, and leaving me in a trance had made haste to act the good Samaritan to my friend. And now, where was he? Where was his wife? And where was Wilburt Cassaway, Jr.?

Like one possessed, I hastened from my office to the street below, took a cab and flew in post haste to the former apartments of the Scencios, where in trepidation and fear I stood before the door and awaited the cooling of my excited nerves. Finally I knocked for admission, then listened.

Receiving no reply, I knocked again, somewhat louder.

Evidently the room was deserted, so going down the corridor to the door leading to the bedroom, I placed my ear to the keyhole and listened for several moments, but all was still.

Battling with the doubts that harassed my soul, with the anxiety for the welfare of my



chum, I left the place and returned to my own apartments, where I had hoped to find Cyrus awaiting me.

I figured thus: As a possible contingency it would be most natural for him to make his way to my bachelor establishment immediately upon his release from the police station, so with new hopes I entered my rooms and shot a swift, vivid glance in each direction.

They were empty!

Cursing and swearing in short, sharp, convulsive gasps as I paced to and fro in furious strides, like a beast in a menagerie, I rehearsed the drama so far enacted during the last twenty-four hours, and to add to my rage, I saw myself throughout the spectacle in the role of a driveling idiot.

I had gone to the rooms of the woman across the street with the avowed intention of worming from her secret soul the knowledge that I felt convinced she was harboring, only to have the latter turn the tables on me and force me to reveal the doubts and fears of my harassed soul through her devilish machinations.

And as I bethought myself of what had come to me in the weird rooms at No. 16, I went to the window and shook my helpless fist at the house



across the way, then gasped in consternation and dismay.

On the stoop stood Cyrus, and what a spectacle! He was hatless and coatless, his hair in wild disorder, his face blue with cold, and his eyes!

"Great Heavens!" I shouted, and racing through the rooms I took the stairs three flights at a time, and tore across the street like an escaped lunatic.

Up the stairs ran Cyrus, and I after him as fast as my legs could propel me.

"At last!" he rasped as he burst the door open and stepped into the room.

In terror I stopped my momentum spasmodically at sight of the round-headed hammer in his right hand, a hammer that boded ill in the hand of the outraged man before me.

"Silence!" calling as he looked about the room. "Ah!" and he stood erect, whilst the hunted look upon his face began to give way by degrees.

I placed myself at an advantageous position where I could see without exposing myself unnecessarily. And as I did so, I beheld the self-same spectacle of the past night standing in the centre of the room, and garbed in the identical clinging gauze, motionless as when last I had seen it.

"I have come to you, Silence, as you knew I



would, either sooner or later," and with a loud thud the hammer fell from his hand to the floor as he advanced several feet toward the statue-like figure of Silence.

"My wife has broken her vow," and a sob seemed to rise to his throat and choke him for a moment.

"So she has left your bed?"

I tried to shout a warning to my crazed friend at the sound of the feminine voice coming from an opposite direction than that of the veiled figure, but my tongue, confound it! refused to articulate, refused to utter a sound.

"Yes, she left me the day before yesterday. The Great Spirit above," holding his trembling hand above his head, "knows that I tried to make her happy, that I did my duty as a husband, that I loved and cherished her with the faithfulness of a slave."

"And why do you tell me your tale of woe?"

"Because you can advise and console me."

"No other reason?"

I'll swear upon my honor as a lawyer and a gentleman that as I looked at the face of the woman that no sound left her roseate lips, yet whence came the voice of the speaker?

"I'm dying for love, for want of affection, for peace of mind and soul, and," advancing a step,



"if you do not give it me I will kill myself with poison, leap from the end of a ferryboat or from the heights of the Brooklyn Bridge and make an end of this living hell."

"It is your own fault."

"How so?"

"You were offered fame, renown and love, and you spurned it with the bombastic declaration of 'For the honor of your name and the virtue of your wife.' Where is your wife, your honor?"

"Lost! Lost! Lost!"

"Then find it, and after having found it, return to me and I will see whether I can be a comfort to you."

"I want you now, this moment," savagely.

"And it happens that you want something, too, that has to be denied you, for a time at least."

"Why?"

"Because, sir, for some time to come my affections are in the keeping of a little bearded man, who dotes upon my beauty, wit and culture."

"Bangs!" he shouted, gnashing his teeth furiously.

I was paralyzed at the utter audacity of this woman. I was a seething cauldron of murder, though powerless to lift a hand or foot.

"I'll kill him, the whelp! That's why he left



me in that dirty police station and decamped with my money, eh?.'

"Because he has accepted what you spurned with contempt? You were offered the rarest jewel in my possession, and you refused it. Affection such as no man ever received from a woman was tendered you, yet you would have none of it. So leave this room at once for I expect company."

"I will not!"

"I will summon the police if you do not make a hasty exit."

"I am desperate. My mind is in chaos, the sanctity of my house has been ravaged anew, and I am mad, mad with the lust of murder. So do not goad me if you value your life and mine."

"What have I to do with your domestic woes?"

"I want consolation."

"Will you leave this room?"

"I will not."

"Then in defense of honor I shall ring for the police," and the next moment the tintinnabulation of a bell sounded through the room.

"I'll kiss you if I die!" and he caught the figure in his arms and held it with a vise-like grip as he pressed his flame-red lips to it.

Slowly, with glassing eyes and indrawn breath, he receded from the figure, his dark orbs never leaving it for a moment.



What had happened? I asked myself as I divided my attention between the two malcontents. I saw no palpable move from the woman, yet Cyrus acted as if he had been stung. Impassively she stood there, unresponsive and silent.

Then, terror or terrors! He snatched the hammer from the floor, sprang to the woman and with a savage oath, it descended and crashed into the skull.

And in the excitement I forgot the peril of my life and the condition of the man. With three bounds I had him by the scruff of the neck and was dragging him toward the door and into the hall, when he suddenly turned upon me with all his insane fury, and fought me against the wall, where he bit and chewed me as if he were a jungle beast unleashed.

"You! You!" and upon the floor I was thrown with giant force, whilst his fingers clawed my face and choked my throat until my very tongue hung blue from my mouth.

"I'll kill you, Bangs!"

The tumult in the corridor was deafening; and, only after a reporter and three policemen clubbed my friend from my prostrate body did I realize the full gravity of my position.

Painfully I rose to my feet, readjusted my collar and cravat, and, as I was about to render an



explanation to the guardians of the peace, the Woman in Purple entered the hall.

"Arrest that man, officers!"

"What has he done?" from one of the policemen.

"He has demolished a priceless statue in wax."

"Wax!" gasped Cyrus, whilst I was struck dumb at the woman's announcement.

"I believe that he is the same individual who stole my pearls some four months ago, but returned them for some inexplicable reason."

"You lie!" and he made a savage spring toward her, but was checked by the officers.

"What's your name?" asked the presiding officer.

"Cyrus Scencio."

"Do not believe him, officer. He bears a wonderful resemblance to the artist Scencio, and is trading on this knowledge."

"Are you Cyrus Scencio?"

"I am," losing his temper now.

"You lie, sir!"

"Bangs, you scoundrel! you know that I am what I claim to be. Then why espouse this woman's cause?"

"Who's Bangs? I am sure that you do not know what you are talking about."

"What!" he shouted as he stared at me in fury.



"I never heard of the gentleman. My name is Fitzpatrick, if you please."

"When friends lie about their own identity and denounce their lifelong chums it is time for a man to seek other haunts."

"Are you two acquainted?" asked one of the officers of me.

"Only casually. In fact, we met for the first time but yesterday, in a barroom on 59th street, where he introduced himself as an Italian nobleman, giving the name of Varmuchii."

"Bangs, you villain!" and he frothed at the mouth with his terrible rage consuming his senses.

"Officers, I happen to be personally acquainted with the gentleman whose unsullied name this man is endeavoring to bring into this disgraceful scene. His first name is Everett; he is a well-known lawyer, and is unlike, either in face, figure or dress, this gentleman who announces himself as Fitzpatrick.

"You lie!" shrieked Cyrus, stamping his foot and glaring at the unflinching woman with burning eyes of wrath.

"My name is Fitzpatrick, Henry Fitzpatrick, and yours is James Varmuchii, the scalawag who got me into an ugly barroom brawl, where we were arrested, carried off to jail, and where I,



Henry Fitzpatrick, bailed myself out; and, believing in your probity and honor, sent my sister to the station about three o'clock this morning with five hundred dollars, the amount of your bail. Why lie about your identity?"

I was furious at the chump's stupidity. Here we were doing our utmost to shield his real identity, and yet with the obstinacy of an ass the fool persisted in saying that he was Cyrus Scencio!

To the police station we went for a second time, where, after 'phoning to the precinct named, my asseverations were confirmed beyond the point of cavil or of doubt.

Again I bailed myself out (the amount was but \$25.00) only to be rearrested as I was in the act of leaving, for my non-appearance at Court to answer to the charge of drunkenness and disorderly conduct.

In a separate cell from that of my friend I was locked, and in the very long hours that followed I gave my thoughts full scope. Inadvertently I had bungled, and that most idiotically. And being a lawyer, and well versed in the statute laws of my city, I had no palpable excuse to offer in extenuation of my puerile folly, save, perhaps, the poor one of excitement. And so the time passed by in long, dragging stages; dusk and night found me in my self-same posture; for the nonce



a defeated man, and swamped in the lagoon of misery, doubt and despair.



## CHAPTER XII.

### SUNDERING THE BONDS.

I was in a quandary. All I had to do if I cared to free myself was to announce my true identity, tell the truth, and the case against me would have been dropped, as far as I was concerned. The revelation of my true status in this community, though, would have divulged the name of my chum, whereupon the cat would have been out of the bag and the papers would have been teeming with the news of his domestic eruption. No, I would fight the case as best I could. I would persist in my present course and win the battle with flying colors. Just what my *modus operandi* would be depended upon that of the prosecutor's.

The night had been bestial with the drunken shouts and singing of a dozen men in as many cells, and I welcomed the advent of morning with open heart and arms.

To pass away the time between dawn and the hour set for court to open—9 A. M.—I sent for a



paper, with the intention of thus passing the hours in reading the news.

And I read, too, and faith, the news that stared me in the face, in great big, glaring type, caused me to tremble in every fibre of my animation.

“SCANDAL IN HIGH LIFE!”

“Yesterday one of our reporters stumbled upon a real scoop in the way of a tragedy, witnessing in person the ending of the last scene in Act I. Married in haste to repent at leisure seems to be the case of the Cassaways and the Scencios. And to make things more melodramatic and spicy, a lawyer named Everett Bangs, and a mysterious Woman in Purple are figuring more or less conspicuously in the case.”

I swore lustily at this mention of my name, then proceeded to digest this most delectable news.

“It was in June that the son of Wilburt Cassaway, Sr., owner of one of our contemporary newspapers, and his chum, a gifted artist named Cyrus Scencio, celebrated a double wedding in the Little Church Around the Corner; and, after the usual wedding breakfast, spent their joint honeymoon in parts unknown. Just why the elder Cassaway’s paper made no announcement of his son’s marriage has been the topic of keen speculation and conjecture for several months. Yes-



terday, through a strange coincidence, the secret leaked out that the son had married against his papa's wishes, and was subsequently dismissed from the editorial staff and disinherited.

"The two couples, upon their return from their honeymoon, rented suites in a fashionable apartment house on Sixtieth street, near Fifth avenue. And, to make their new lives interesting, the bachelor friend of the couples, Bangs, must perforce move his quarters to the same establishment, where all was love and good cheer until Act I, Scene 1, when the beautiful Woman in Purple made her debut at a suite of elaborate rooms across the street at No. 16.

"The woman, educated, refined, and beautiful as an houri, has so far succeeded in shrouding her identity in impenetrable mystery. A reporter learned that a real estate broker named Stewart was the lessee of the woman's apartments, but that is the gist of the information procurable regarding this modern Helen.

"Yesterday suits for absolute divorce were instituted by Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., against his wife Florence, who prior to her marriage was a Miss Esty, one of the younger members of smart society, naming Everett Bangs, the friend and lawyer, as co-respondent; and Mrs. Janice Scencio against her husband, the artist, Cyrus Scencio,



naming the Woman in Purple as co-respondent, against whom a separate suit is to be filed to-day for \$50,000 for alienating her husband's affections. Mrs. Scencio was a Miss La Trube, of New Orleans, La., a beauty of rare wit, possessing a wonderful ability for classical music, and is a member of aristocratic society.

"Bangs and the husband of Mrs. Scencio were arrested Thanksgiving Day for assault and battery, drunkenness and disorderly conduct, and lodged in jail, where Bangs deposited \$200 as bail for his appearance at court to answer the charges against him, and left. About 3 A. M. the mysterious Woman in Purple appeared at the police station and gave bail for Cyrus Scencio, whose name was entered on the blotter as James Varmuchii. The amount was \$500. Both Bangs, who had given the name of Henry Fitzpatrick, and Cyrus Scencio, alias James Varmuchii, forfeited their bail, for neither appeared in court when their names were called.

"Yesterday, at about 10.25 A. M., whilst the reporter was on his way to cover a fire in Harlem, he heard wild shouting before the apartment house of No. 16, where lives the mysterious Woman in Purple, and the scene that he witnessed was a disgrace to civilization. Bangs was lying on the floor in the hall and Cyrus



Scencio on top of him, pounding away on the former's face until it was unrecognizable; and the cause of this catastrophe, the Woman in Purple, stood calmly in the threshold of her door and watched the bloody encounter. Only the timely arrival of three policemen prevented an act of murder.

"Each combatant was arrested. Bangs denied his own identity and that of his one-time bosom friend, Scencio. The woman denied Scencio's assertion that Bangs was Bangs and not Fitzpatrick, and that said Scencio was not Scencio, but a masquerader who had on a former occasion hypothecated a priceless string of pearls belonging to her, and returned them for an unknown reason. Scencio swore that he was the artist, that Bangs was Bangs and not Fitzpatrick, called the woman a liar and denounced his friend as a scoundrel.

"What these two were doing in the apartments of the woman needs an investigation by the police. A beautiful life-size wax statue, an exact reproduction of the Woman in Purple, was smashed with a boilermaker's hammer in the hands of Scencio. How came these two in the woman's rooms? The artist (Scencio) when arrested, had neither coat, hat nor collar, though the thermometer was below freezing. Why does



the woman in question deny the identity of Cyrus Scencio and the lawyer, Bangs? Why does Bangs deny his own identity and that of his chum, Cyrus, and why does Scencio persist in his assertion that he is the artist, when the day before yesterday he reiterated his assertion that he was Var-muchii?

“Probably when Scene 1, Act II, opens in the way of a hearing of the two divorce cases, interesting developments will be brought to light that will shame the face of every respectable citizen of this community. And it is a foregone conclusion that the paper of the elder Cassaway will have nothing to say, that it will be silent as a Sphinx, as the courts thresh this example of Society’s rotten members and expose the gilded cesspool, reeking with the stench of debauchery, vice and crime.”

I threw the yellow sheet on the floor and ground it with the heel of my foot as I swore the vilest oaths that man ever conceived; I battered against the bars of my cell and tore my hair in frenzied rage and despair, for the paper lied, its inference was damnable against my reputation and my character; its allusions, so daringly drawn, robbed me of the wonted respect of my fellow-citizens, and branded me a scoundrel black as hell.



"A caller to see you," said a policeman as he unlocked the door of my putrid cell and led me to the Captain's private office, where, face blue with wrath, stood Wilburt Cassaway, Sr.

"Mr. Fitzpatrick, this gentleman wishes to speak to you," and as he spoke I noted a faint smile hover at the corners of his mouth.

"This farce has gone too far. I am Everett Bangs, the lawyer, as you are aware, provided, of course, that you have read the yellow sheet that exploited a double column of damnable lies and fables regarding my friend Cyrus Scencio, his wife and Mrs. Cassaway."

"Everett," and the poor old father of Wilburt brushed the tears from his face as he grabbed my hand. "Tell me that the paper lied, that you are innocent of the charges launched against you."

"Mr. Cassaway, if I lie I hope that a bolt of lightning will descend from the heavens and strike me dead where I stand. By the faith of my fathers and the God above us, I swear that I am innocent!"

"Send for Mr. Scencio, Captain."

"As you wish, Mr. Cassaway," and he gave orders to have Cyrus appear in his private office at once.

"Bangs," possessing himself of both of my



hands, "I am worth close to nine million dollars, and every dollar of it will be spent to clear the foul charges against you, my daughter-in-law and Cyrus. All I ask of you is to help me in this forthcoming battle. Oh, the shame! the shame!" and he wept as few men are called upon to weep in a lifetime.

"Et', forgive me," and Cyrus held his hands toward me as he entered the room, again his former self.

"Friend," gripping his hand, "I forgive you. And where before I stood by your side and fought for your happiness, I now lay aside the business cares of my office and devote my energy to the clearing of your honor and your name."

"So far neither has been assailed."

I said nothing. Why broach the terrible news when others could do so without rending their hearts with sorrow?

"Cyrus."

"Sist!" winking at the tear-stained face of the elder man.

"Mr. Scencio, there need be no further call for shrouding your identity. And allow me to say that you may speak in my presence without reservation."

"What has happened?" shaking Mr. Cassaway's hand in a friendly clasp.



"A great many things of late to make an old man sorrow, Cyrus. But first," turning toward the Captain, "is there no way to nol-pros the double charges against my friends here?"

"I do not know. I think, though, that it is just possible that something might be done with the Judge."

"Before whom will the cases be tried?"

"O'Shaughnessy. Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"Don't place too much hope on the issue though, Mr. Cassaway; for, as you are aware, O'Shaughnessy is a man who will not deviate an iota from the restricted line of demarcation between right and wrong, nor will a fixed emolument help him to see your way. All I can advise is, that you state the full particulars in a type-written letter, and send it to him by messenger at the hour of opening of court."

I was about to speak to Cyrus when a muttered invective passed his compressed lips.

During the Captain's speech he had glanced at the latter's desk, and in doing so caught sight of the blaring headlines in red, and the succeeding sixteen-point type announcement of our arrest.

"Let me see this paper, Captain."



He read it, word for word, and as he did so, he ground his teeth in simon rage and anger.

"The fidelity and virtue of my wife is robbed me, my marriage-bed is outraged, my honor and respect trampled upon as a noxious weed; the woman who swore to me upon her bended knees besmears my name with acts of violence, and brands you, friend Bangs, a scoundrel who stole the affections of another man's wife. Hell!" and the desk rattled as his clenched fist smote it with redoubled fury and rage. "I'll make your son, Mr. Cassaway, bite the dust of death; I'll make the woman who would drive me to the level of a brute, dye the earth with her cankerous blood; I'll wipe them from the face of respectability and hurl them to the devouring abyss of unexplored eternity."

The Captain had risen, and stood at the end of the desk, struck dumb with fear and amazement; Mr. Cassaway had receded toward the wall, with lips convulsed with undreamt agony; and I, terrorized at the vehemence of his speech, quaked in my shoes with fear and horror at this transformed vision of the friend and brother of my early youth, now the very apotheosis of an avenging Nemesis.

Little more was said by either of us. In the custody of a plain-clothes man we went to a near-



by restaurant and made a most miserable attempt of justice to the palatable breakfast. The truth is that we were too full with our emotions to feel the effects of our long fast.

Judge O'Shaughnessy received the message from Mr. Cassaway; but, entering the courtroom an hour later, I lost all hope of clemency as I began to study his features. However, Mr. Cassaway told me not to despair, that things could be a great deal worse than they were, and that he believed the Judge would consider the facts as they stood, and exercise as much leniency as was compatible to the offense.

As Fitzpatrick and Varmuchii we were tried, and as Fitzpatrick and Varmuchii we were fined the identical amount of our respective bail, forfeited by us on Thanksgiving Day.

Leaving the court room we at once repaired to my office, where it was agreed that Cyrus bring a countersuit for divorce against his wife, Janice, and that detectives be hired to shadow the younger Cassaway and Mrs. Scencio.

At first Cyrus demurred, but was finally won to the proposal by the joint efforts of Mr. Cassaway and myself.

Immediately I set to work in filling out the papers naming Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., as co-respondent, had them filed, and, with the understanding



with the aged father of Wilburt that we make my office a sort of rendezvous in the future, we departed, Cyrus and myself taking a cab and being driven to the Grand Central Depot, where we took a train for Troy, and where the sale of the farm was placed in the hands of a broker. All the furniture and personal effects of the Scencios were sold at auction, save such things as Cyrus' wearing apparel and his canvases, and in twenty-four hours we were back in New York again and seated in my den, prepared for anything that might chance our way.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### FRUSTRATED.

There appears on the face of the evidence on hand no palpable reason for the strange conduct of the wife of Cyrus Scencio. She possessed an affectionate husband, a talented one, who in due course of time would have made her the proudest woman on earth; their social position was unsailable; she possessed beauty, talent, and a certain amount of the world's goods inherited from an aunt. Why, then, drive her chosen spouse to the point of desperation and of despair?

She had left Cyrus painting in his studio the day preceding Thanksgiving, and with an affectionate adieu departed with the announcement that he could expect her return not later than five P. M.

Leaving the Grand Central Station, she took a hansom and was driven to a fashionable department store on Twenty-third street, where she



purchased sundry articles dear to the feminine heart.

In front of the store, in a large touring car, sat Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., and as Mrs. Scencio reached the pavement he coughed, she looked up, and their eyes met.

"Janice!" springing from the automobile and hastening to her side. "Where have you been? And you treated me so shamefully," deprecatingly, as he took one of her hands in his and pressed it affectionately.

"Wilburt, please don't," and something like a line of pain appeared at the corners of her mouth.

"Quick, Janice, here comes my wife and father!" and in a trice he had her in the auto and was away, speeding up Fifth avenue and laughing up his sleeve at the adroit ruse.

"Would you mind a private luncheon at Martin's or Sherry's?"

"No."

"Where shall it be?"

"Sherry's."

"Good!"

"Wilburt," she asked when they were seated in a private room, "are you still living apart from your wife?"

"Yes."

"Why do you not return to her?"



"You ask me?" and his face frowned. "You know why."

"Haven't you forgotten me in these past months?"

"Can I forget? Can I wipe from my memory the knowledge of the past, the sweet remembrance of your face, your form, your love and kisses? No."

"Those days are past, irrevocably and irretrievably past."

"Oh, no, they're not."

"And why not?"

"Because you cannot forget what I was to you, what I am to you even after a lapse of several months. I love you, Janice, I love you with a wild abandonment of my heart. When I think of you waves of fire seem to sweep my senses and consume me with the desire for your love. You are not happy and contented in your imposed exile; you are not your cheery self; and, Janice, you may as well confess the fact, the incontrovertible fact——"

"That?" she interposed hastily as she leaned across the table and sought to read his very thoughts.

"That you long for the return of the old regime."

"How dare you, Wilburt Cassaway?"



"I am a man of the world, and understand your sex, probably better than you do. At least I understand one woman, and that's yourself. Where have you been exiled?"

"On a dreary farm on the Hudson near Troy."

"And Cyrus, how fares he?"

"To all intents and purposes, happy. From early morn till sundown he paints, paints the forests, dells and skies, and when the chickens go to roost——"

"You go to bed?"

"We retire."

"What a humdrum existence for a lady of your attainments. How can you stand it?"

"I cannot endure it much longer," sighing to herself as she thought of what awaited her on her return to Troy.

"If this sort of existence is irksome to you, why not abrogate it?"

"I have given it some consideration, but cannot see my way clear."

"I do, though."

"You?"

"Yes. Do as I am going to do in a day or so and you will be free, free to act as you may elect."

"And it is?"

"Apply for a divorce."

"A divorce?" opening her eyes wide with aston-



ishment, "and have the horrid papers teem with it? Never! Again I have no justifiable grounds for such an action against Cyrus, even if I wished to entertain your suggestion for a moment."

"A thousand grounds may be mentioned."

"For instance?"

"Incompatibility of temperament."

"It would never do. I have not forgotten what took place in our apartments; and, were I to sue on such statutory grounds, Cyrus is certain to enter a countersuit charging infidelity and naming you as co-respondent. No, it cannot be thought of. Everett Bangs would condescend to act as a witness for Cyrus, and you know what that would mean to both of us."

"In suing for my divorce I am going to name him as co-respondent."

"Wilburt Cassaway!"

"What's wrong? The proletarian caused our joint aches of heart and soul. And if I see fit to name him as the third party, that is my affair. And I'll do it, too! or die in the attempt. And you," catching hold of her trembling hands, "you are to name the Woman in Purple as the third party; then, to make things stronger, enter a separate suit against the minx for alienating your husband's affections, naming the amount of damages at \$50,000."



"The mysterious Woman in Purple?"

"Why not? I saw your husband lavish his veerable affections upon the hussy; I saw their kiss of fire—they were mounted on a chair and locked in each other's arms; I saw, too, the scene that took place in his office where the minx hypnotized him with her devilish beauty as she stripped to the skin in a flash, and, by heaven! she's a goddess, dropped from the heavens, or Satan's queen in human flesh."

"You saw such an act?" incredulously.

"Aye, I saw the sweat of passion stand upon his brow like raindrops upon a sheet of glass; I saw a giant battle fought between blind passion and Dame Virtue, and the cataclysm lust, bred by the siren's terrible beauty of pink flesh, won the battle."

He was trading on the knowledge gleaned by him on that memorable day when he was trapped under the table and held a prisoner for several hours; however, it answered his purpose.

"Why did you not inform me of this sooner?"

"I was given no opportunity."

"You could have written."

"And addressed it to the moon?"

"What was that noise, Wilburt?"

"Where?"

"I believe it came from the next room."



"I hear nothing," after a pause.

"Your revelations concerning Cyrus and the Woman in Purple has upset me terribly."

"Do you know the siren's name?"

"I do not."

"Neither do I. But I will, and that in the very near future. I have engaged two Pinkertons to ascertain her identity, her life's history if possible."

"And why?"

"You will need the information."

"I will?"

"Yes. Provided, of course, that you wish to free yourself of the disgusting alliance that now fetters your will to the dog-like submission to the whims and fancies of a bloodless Bohemian."

"You evidently understand the characteristics of Cyrus. He's as responsive to the thrills of a grand passion as a hen is to the lure of water. I cannot understand him. One would naturally come to the conclusion that a man like him, descendant of a race that has a national reputation for their violent loves and hates, that he would be a veritable whirlwind of passion, though the exact opposite is his case. Oh, I am weary of the life, of the monotonous exile and the sight of paint and palette."



"You will not return to him to-night?" eagerly, as he scanned her flushed face.

"I am not certain."

"I have taken your old apartments."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"And why?"

"Because it helps me to see the face and figure of a woman I would not nor could not forget. It vivifies the perspective outline of her clinging form and sunlit tresses soft as down; keeps alive the sweet remembrance of the stolen sweets, the kisses that have seared my soul and made of me a maniac dying for the want of her who left me to the sorrow of an eating heart."

"Wilburt, shame! shame!"

"I want you," fiercely, as he leaped to his feet and gripped her hands. "I want you for my own, and I'll have you, too. I'll put asunder the bonds that hold us both to unresponsive mates through the agency of the divorce courts, and——"

"And smear my name with evil lies and perjured oaths?"

"You! You!" he hissed between his clenched teeth as he surveyed the Woman in Purple. "By heaven! I'll kill you, fiend!" and he snatched a large carving knife from the table and started toward the unflinching woman.



"Probably your temper is in your touring car, sir. Had you not better send for it?" smiling sweetly as she pointed a glinting object at the infuriated man's breast.

"Get out of here!" he thundered, as he glared in wrath at the menacing pistol.

"One moment, and I will be going. I was dining in the next room, and, Mr. Cassaway, I had an object in doing so. I saw you and Mrs. Scencio enter this establishment and, suppose I should say that feminine curiosity prompted me to ask 'for the room next to yours?'"

"You'd be lying, you cat!"

Just what occurred to Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., then is not recorded on the tablets of his memory, for it took place too suddenly for the tabulation of his sight. All he remembers is that there was a loud report, that the tears sprang to his eyes as something came in contact with his mouth with such force that it left a red streak from ear to ear, and that when he brushed the tears from his eyes that he saw nobody save his co-partner in crime seated in her chair and crying hysterically.

Leaving the room he hurried his partner into the automobile and drove post haste to his apartments, his storm-swept soul straining at the leash of blind and impotent fury.



"Be seated in the parlor whilst I divest myself of this fur coat," and he held the portieres apart to allow Mrs. Scencio to enter.

"Oh!" and she staggered backward, trembling like an aspen leaf.

"What's wrong?" from Wilburt, who had heard the exclamatory gasp.

"Wilburt! Wilburt!" and Florence Cassaway, who had been seated in the parlor, sprang to her feet and started toward her husband.

For the nonce he was dumbfounded. A contingency had arisen that virtually stultified his senses for several moments, one that he had not figured on as a possibility nor a probability.

"I must be going," whereupon Mrs. Scencio picked up her skirts and started toward the door, an act that brought Wilburt Cassaway to her side in a moment.

"There need be no haste, Mrs. Scencio, for your train is not due for several hours. Will you not divest yourself of your hat and cloak?" taking the muff from her and placing it on the table.

Submissively the woman did as she was bid, then stood against the mantel and studied the face of her erstwhile friend.

"How came you to enter my apartments?" turning furiously upon the frail and delicate woman who bore his name.



"Do not be angry, Wilburt, for I am sick and worried to the point of distraction."

"Why have you come?"

"To-morrow is Thanksgiving Day, dear; and, surely you do not propose to stay away from your wife and father on this great occasion. I came to our old apartments, only to find strangers occupying them. Inquiring at the desk, I was informed that you had taken the suite vacated by the Scencios, so with the clerk's pass key I entered and have been awaiting your return for over an hour."

"I will have the clerk fired, the scoundrel!"

"He has done nothing wrong. Have I not a right to my husband's quarters?"

"You have not."

"Wilburt," falling on her knees before the heartless brute, "for the love of the child that is to be born I beg of you to leave these apartments and return with me to the home of your father."

"Child!" he gasped incredulously as he clenched his fists.

"Yes, Wilburt, your child," blushing as she bowed her head and shed the tears that came quick and fast.

"Well, Madam," sneeringly, "it is not my child."

"Oh!" and she staggered to her feet and reeled



away from him, pierced at this cruelest blow that a man could inflict upon an innocent woman.

"You scoundrel! Whose child is it, then?" and Wilburt Cassaway, Sr., stepped forth from behind the portieres, livid with rage as he raised his cane above his head.

"Bangs'!" he shouted savagely as he faced about and glared at his father.

"You lie!" and the cane descended with all the force of the irate old man, catching the dodging son on the right shoulder. "Take your wife's hand in yours!"

Evidently he was frightened, otherwise, why did he act as he was commanded?

"Now drop on your knees and apologize, you brute," and with raised cane he stood towering above his son, a fearful spectacle of an outraged sire.

For a moment there was silence as young Cassaway hesitated. Then, to his knees he dropped, overcome at the blind fury of the man who was his father.

"Florence, forgive me!"

"Get up now, you whelp, and make ready to leave. And you, Madam," facing Mrs. Scencio, "you leave, too, and return to your husband."

The fire of the woman's soul had been aroused by this unlooked-for parental opposition, and, as



is invariably the case, the woman's spontaneous ingenuity won the issue.

"As these apartments are mine; and, whereas I am the mistress in this establishment, it falls to my lot to do the commanding if any is to be done. And, whereas your presence is most irksome to my nerves and temperament, I ask that you vacate at once."

"Your apartments!" he fairly screamed in baffled rage.

"My apartments, sir."

"Is this so, Wilburt?"

"How can you doubt the lady's veracity?"

"Then, Madam, I apologize."

"As I expect my husband in a few minutes, I must ask you to vacate immediately."

"Come Wilburt, your hat, and let us be going."

And when the Cassaways had departed, the woman locked the door, threw herself on the divan and gave free rein to her emotions. She wept, this high-bred woman, wept with a wild abandonment of grief inconsolable. Long into the night she lay there, moaning to herself and wishing that she were dead and buried. She was in love, knew it by all the physical tokens known to science, but not with her husband. She had fought against the rampant desire to flee the country and hasten to New York and to the arms



of her lover, who had roused her slumbering senses to the fold of a raging passion; and, now that she had braved the ordeal, she found herself alone, denied the comfort of the man's love for whom she had staked her honor and her soul! placed herself in a position where, if she had thought of returning to her spouse, it was denied her.

And, what of the man in the case? He swore beneath his breath as he got into the automobile and was being driven in the direction of his father's residence, racking his brains for a means of eluding the ordeal awaiting him when once he should be under his parent's roof. He would escape it, he would circumnavigate the impending evil, but how? how to succeed, that was the paramount question.

There must be a grain of truth in the old adage that the Devil provides for his own; and the gentleman in question certainly did his level best for his sworn concomitant when Necessity reared her walls to the highest peak.

The residence of the Cassaways was but a block away when the wooed succor came to the distracted man in the shape of another automobile containing a friend.

"Hello, Wilburt!" called the individual in ques-



tion as he drove close to the car containing the Cassaways.

"Hello, George!" and Wilburt had the driver stop the car.

"Good evening, Mrs. Cassaway," and shaking the elder Cassaway's hand. "Out for a spin? That's good. I heard yesterday that you were under the weather. Return of the gout, I believe?"

"Yes. I am much improved though, to-day."

"By the way, Wilburt, young Sanderson had a painful accident about an hour ago. A Twenty-third street car caught his automobile on Sixth avenue and crushed it against an L pillar, mangling Sanderson frightfully. I've just come from his bedside and was on my way to your residence to see you."

"And why?" mentally blessing his lucky star that at last escape was in sight.

"He says that you know something about the stock deal between him and Mitchell, and that unless you close the transaction for him to-day that he will lose nearly \$64,000. If you do not mind—I am certain that your wife and father will not object, seeing that this friend of yours is at death's door—I'll take you to the hospital in my car so as not to inconvenience your folks. Any-



way, I promised to return with you at an early hour."

"Certainly, George. I'd be a cad not to see Sanderson in his present plight," and into the next car he leaped and up the street they sped, leaving the elder Cassaway black with helpless wrath.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE TRAP.

The night was fearfully cold, yet Wilburt Casaway, Jr., haunted the southeast corner long into the night, his storm collar up over his eyes and partially hiding his face as he divided his attention between the sentinel stationed in front of the apartment house and the windows of the suite once belonging to the Scencios. And when toward the break of dawn the sentry showed no evident signs of relinquishing his long vigil, Casaway took himself to his favorite club and passed Thanksgiving Day in a riot of drink, whilst the wife of Cyrus, having placed an unspanable chasm between herself and her husband, spent the long hours of the morning in tears and sleep.

The storm which had been raging for the past eighteen hours abated somewhat in its severity, and after a light luncheon she dressed, left the apartments and paid a long visit to a certain



lawyer's office, where the first step for an absolute divorce was taken.

And Wilburt, true to his oath, did likewise. What cared he for the good name of a man who was nothing to him? He had lost his conscience and his self-respect in his mad infatuation for a woman who was a wife, who was the helpmeet of his once chosen chum. Of his broken-hearted spouse he thought not, for his gray-haired father he had no pity, of the outcome of the divorce proceedings he cared not, save that he hoped to be free from a bondage that goaded his heart and soul.

The night is most advantageous for the prowling of vice and crime, and the soulless man, slave to the amour of unholy passion, found the nocturnal stillness most propitious for his premeditated designs.

It was the night following Thanksgiving Day that his patience was rewarded. The man who had been haunting the immediate vicinity of the apartment house failed to appear as usual, and Wilburt Cassaway profited by this long looked-for opportunity.

Speeding up the three flights of stairs, he hastened to the suite in question, and with his latch-key entered the sitting-room.

The woman's face was crimson, the paper in her hand shook, and when the man of her



thoughts made his presence known by a low cough, she leaped to her feet with a startled cry.

"Do not be frightened, dear," depositing his hat and gloves on the table and going up to her, where, after an affectionate kiss, they seated themselves and at once began to relieve their hearts of the burdens that so long had impinged them.

"Wilburt!"

"Yes, dear."

"Have you seen the papers? This edition?" holding the paper toward him.

"Yes, and," laughing softly, "I am determined to profit by it."

"Profit?"

"Most assuredly, and in a very ingenious manner at that. You read the beautiful article about your recalcitrant husband, the Woman in Purple, her duplicate in the shape of a wax statue, and that scoundrel Bangs?"

"Yes."

"Well, dear, an idea occurred to me as I read the article. But first, did you receive my note?"

"I did, and had the lease of these apartments made out in my name five minutes after the receipt of your letter."

"Bravo! You're a little trump! Why did you



not phone me at the club when you went to the lawyer's office?"

"I was afraid that somebody would overhear our conversation."

"Yesterday while standing on the opposite corner and cursing the scalawag who has been shadowing these apartments for the last two days, I noticed a large truck drive up to No. 16 across the street, in itself nothing to rouse the phlegmatic senses of the ordinary plebeian nor yours truly. But, when a beautiful woman in scarlet comes upon the scene there is to be news. Two men were carrying something between them, and, coming within observing distance, I perceived that the object they were handing so gingerly into the truck was the much talked-of wax figure of my Lady in Purple. Naturally I wondered what was to become of it. And when the truck started up the avenue, I got into an automobile and followed in their wake. Guess where the statue went?"

"I could not guess if I would."

"To a sculptor's studio on Thirty-fifth street."

"Ah, I see. It is to be put together again."

"Yes. The skull was caved in with the boiler-maker's hammer in the hands of your infuriated husband, and in falling the wax lady broke her beautiful arms and legs. Now what would you do with the foregoing knowledge? Could you



put it to good effect, profit by it at the expense of, say, the owner?"

"I do not know."

"I did, or to be more concise, I expect to."

"How so?"

"Through the agency of a modiste."

"A dressmaker!"

"Is this news so startling?" laughing merrily.

"Listen, sweet: The idea occurred to me instantly. After making a memorandum of the sculptor's address, I hastened to a modiste and gave a pressing order for a purple dress."

"To be an exact reproduction of my lady's across the street?"

"Yes."

"How foolish of you!"

"Why so?"

"Wilburt, you have bungled. How can you give an order for a woman's dress when you do not know her measurements, nor the style of the make-up?"

"Is that so! Suppose I informed you that it was a princess, then what?"

"I retract, for the dress in question is a princess."

"As to the measurements, I took a gambler's chance and guessed. I gave imperative orders



that the dress be delivered at this address not later than 10 P. M. to-night."

"What for?"

"And the wax figure will arrive at almost any second."

"The figure!"

"And you are to array it in the purple dress, and then for the compromising situation."

"With Cyrus?"

"Softly!" lowering his voice. "Yes. About an hour after the figure arrived at the studio I entered, and delivering a few remarks concerning the weather, I gave instructions that the figure must be mended by 9 P. M. to-night; and, fearing that it might be damaged while in transit I had decided to send my own automobile for it. George Cluff is to call at the artist's studio and deliver it at this address."

"And Cyrus, is he still in town?"

"Oh, yes, eating his heart with remorse over the terrible rebuff administered him by the lady across the way. He is recuperating next door, across the way. He is recuperating next door, with Bangs, the officious gentleman who is to be caught in a trap to-night. I have had two notes prepared, one written by a waitress purporting to come from the mysterious lady and addressed to Cyrus, and the other written by Cluff and ad-



dressed to my wife, calling for an interview at her husband's apartments. And if my calculations do not go awry, both you and I will be in possession of our divorces in a very short time. For some reason or other you seem to doubt my assertion concerning Cyrus and the Woman in Purple. An ocular demonstration will convince you against your will, hence the premeditated scene between him and his inamorita."

"There's a knock!" in a hushed voice.

"Who's there?" from Wilburt as he peered through the keyhole.

"Cluff, you chump! Open the door, for this beastly thing is heavy."

"The figure!" to Mrs. Scencio, as he opened the door.

"Looks like a mummy, eh, Cluff, old boy?" when the hypothecated lady in wax stood near the mantel, swathed in white linen.

A few jovial remarks between the two friends, and then the conspirators were alone again.

"Heavens! Wilburt, what a divine figure of loveliness!" as the linen dropped from the double of my lady in purple.

"Beautiful, eh? There!" kissing the bloodless lips.

"How dare you, Wilburt Cassaway? And in my presence, too!"



"It's but a wax statue."

"But it is too realistic. Is the woman really as beautiful as this reproduction?"

"You have seen the lady, twice, I believe, so ought to be able to judge whether this flatters her or not."

"I did not examine the lady very closely."

"Well, I did. And take it from me, this wax figure does not flatter her; in fact, it could not possibly do the lady justice."

"And you really expect your wife, Cyrus and his chum Bangs to appear here, in these very rooms?"

"I do."

"And pray, where will we be?"

"Not in evidence, I assure you. The portieres there are about as good a hiding place from whence to view the impending scenes as one could possibly wish. And as one act is scheduled to take place immediately after the fall of the curtain on the preceding one, we can expect quite an amusing night."

"That must be the boy from the dressmaker's," she said as a small knock was heard on the panel of the door.

"Here's a quarter, lad," and locking the door he untied the bundle and at once the culprits pro-



ceeded to array the figure in a purple princess gown.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was 10.15 P. M. and I, seated in a cozy corner, my legs propped in a most unconventional manner and pipe between my teeth, was prognosticating, wondering as to the cause of my friend's long absence. He had left me about eight o'clock with the intention of getting a shave and haircut, and promised to return in an hour, and here it was after ten, and no Cyrus.

"Come in!" called I, as someone knocked for admission.

"A message for Mr. Scencio, sir," and the lad handed me a book to sign the receipt for the message and then was gone.

And suddenly I leaped to my feet in consternation. I, Everett Bangs, a lawyer, and friend of Cyrus Scencio, had broken the seal of the envelope and was in the act of unfolding the missive when the fact of my breach of friendship percolated my jumbled senses.

"Here's a nice kettle of fish!" said I aloud as I laid the message on the table and returned to my couch. Then speculation became rife and overpowering. Was the missive from a woman? Of course, I had to get up again and inspect the handwriting on the envelope.



"Always and ever a woman in the case," I heard myself say as I laid the envelope down and returned to my berth, convinced that one of the gentler sex had written the note.

For several minutes I pondered the problem, wondering whether it contained any news of importance, whether it was from a casual acquaintance, or the Woman in Purple!

Instantly I was upon my feet again and was reading the contents of the note, brief, concise, and to the point:

"Mr. Cyrus Scencio:

"Dear Sir: Owing to the libelous account in yesterday's paper mentioning me as the third party in the divorce proceedings inaugurated by your wife, I ask you to meet me at 10.30 P. M., at your wife's apartments, at No. 17, rerented by her this day.

Sincerely yours,

"SILENCE."

Hastily I drew my watch from my pocket and noted the time. It was 10.45.

Again I acted on the impulse of the moment. I wrote a short note wherein I stated that Cyrus' secretary had opened the note, that the addressed was out, and that I would have him call as per appointment should he return ere 11.15 P. M.,



sealed it and despatched it to the Woman in Purple via the hall-boy.

"A pretty scene there'll be," thought I, "when these two women face each other."

"Was I long, Et'?" asked Cyrus as he entered the room. "I got interested in a game of professional pool between——"

"One moment," I interpolated. "There's a note here for you brought by a messenger boy," handing him the opened envelope with nervous fingers.

"Who broke the seal?"

"I did. To see whether it contained urgent business. And, friend, if you intend to keep the appointment you have no time to burn."

"Ten-thirty, the note says."

"Yes. And it's 10.48 now."

"I'm going then. Will you come along?"

"I am not invited."

"You goose! Do you think that I want you to enter the room? No. But you can remain in the hall and be an eye-witness to the issue. The door can be left ajar, can it not?"

"Probably."

"Then come on."

In a few minutes we were in the next apartment house. And as Cyrus entered the sitting room from the corridor he managed to leave the door ajar to the extent of at least two inches,



for which I thanked him presently, otherwise I should have missed a sight for the gods.

The Woman in Purple stood slightly turned toward the wall, her left arm resting on the mantel, her face half buried in the folds of her sleeves, as if in distress.

"Why," and Cyrus stopped abruptly at sight of the silent figure in the room. "What has happened, Miss Silence? I thought your note said that I was to meet my wife here?"

Receiving no reply, he stroked his mustache in doubt for several moments and studied the figure of the woman.

"I suppose it is too late for me to apologize for my errant conduct of two days ago. Believe me, I was mad, raving mad with the sorrow that ate into my vitals like acid into flesh. Can you realize what it means to have your ideal shattered, your faith in virtue blasted by the surreptitious hand of insidious vice, your honor, name and respect trampled on as if it were a snake? I read the disgraceful article in the paper relative to my wife's application for divorce, my arrest and that of my chum, and I thirst with the desire to kill the proletarian who wrote it. I have been served with the papers in a divorce suit instigated by the woman who bears my name, and whom I was led to believe was to meet me here. Where is



she? Evidently we are alone, just why I do not know unless it be that I am to be berated for my ungentlemanly conduct of day before yesterday. Woman!" and he stepped somewhat closer to her, "I do not know who you are, what you are, or whence you came. I have made it a practice never to misjudge a woman without having a concrete basis upon which to build my opinion. Just why it is that you had me arrested for robbery and then withdrew your charge I do not know. Why you entered my office and stung my soul with your classical beauty I cannot divine. To me it appears in the guise of a dream, unrealistic, impossible, vague, save such rare occasions as for instance, Thanksgiving Day, and to-night, occasions when I saw in flesh and blood the subtle likeness of a gladness, warm, tender, fierce and repelling, undulating with the witchery of a vowed enchantress, then palpitating with the auric blush of insuperable love. Why pierce my heart with the racking thirst of Tantalus? Why lure me with potent eyes that rob me of my senses, my manhood and my honor, then spurn me with well calculated indifference to the love that is denied me, and to the sorrow crowned monarch in my soul? Listen: Again the eclipse of blind passion rose in the distance and threw a shadow over my heart and home. A shaft of red and black sped



through the white-whipped sky and found me prey to the sting of its merciless thrust. Oh, this evil, this shame, concocted by a nefarious wretch who smote Queen Virtue in the face and dragged her to the lees of Hell, that made of me a monster, black with wrath, a moral leper of her who was my queen."

"And is this lady your queen?" asked Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., as he and Mrs. Scencio stepped forth from behind the portieres.

I saw the lips of Cyrus grow white as his teeth closed hard upon them; I felt the succeeding silence pall upon me with frigid awe as the seconds spun into eternity and the minutes dragged on and on.

"Innocence personified!" and with a toss of her proud head Mrs Scencio walked toward the centre of the room.

"Quite a beauty, this creature of yours, Cyrus!"

"You lie, you villain!" and with clenched fists he strode toward the other, eager for assault.

"What are you doing here, pouring out your love to a stick in rags?"

"Yes, Cyrus, what are you to the original of this?" lifting the arm from the mantel and straightening the head.

"The woman in wax!" he gasped as he staggered backwards.



"She's quite beautiful, though, Cyrus, eh? Mrs. Mystery?" tickling the wax chin with sardonical glee.

"Damn you!" and with a bestial spring and savage lust in his eyes he made for the man, bent upon murdering him.

"Stay!" and the flash of steel made good the injunction.

"You devil!"

"Gentleman, Cyrus."

"And you, minx!" facing his wife.

"Lady, Cyrus. Can not you distinguish us from the associates you have mentioned, people who appear to be persona grata with you and that skinflint Bangs?"

"By the eternal gods! I'll——"

"But one God, please!" cut in Wilburt. "And He's damned you long ago, aye, the day that you sold your hide and soul to the likeness of this thing, who came to your office upon your urgent solicitation and—what a time you two had!"

"And, Cyrus, I have the proofs, such irrefragable ones that they will set me free from you, a man who poses as a martyr in his wife's eyes, his friends' and that of the public, and was not exposed until trapped by the champion of his spouse's fidelity and virtue."

He said not a word in defence, no stinging re-



tort shot from his lips; instead, he merely faced about, left the room and slammed the door shut.

“Bangs!”

His breath was hot and sulphurous, his eyes glaring orbs of scintillating fury, fiendish in their hue, and repelling in their terrible aspect.

“Await my return!”

What was to come? The fearful raspiness of his voice and the deadly glow in his eyes spoke murder. Where was he going? And what was his object?

Like magic came the answer to my excited thoughts: A pistol, then death, probably a double or triple murder!

Like one possessed I flew down the corridor, the stairs and to my apartments, then through the rooms and to my desk, where I kept a large 48-calibre revolver.

It was there.

Relieved for a moment I dropped into a chair and tried to collect my bucolic senses. And, as I did so, the query sprang to my mind: Where had Cyrus gone?

Up I leaped and through the rooms I sped in search of him, but without avail. Then my mind stampeded. Down the elevator and out into the starlit night I hastened, then up one side of the deserted street and down the next, a wild hope



clamoring at my heart that I might overtake my infuriated friend and frustrate his premeditated designs of murder. And when standing on the corner of a street a block distant from the apartment house, the thought assailed my troubled senses that I had acted the idiot, that probably my chum had returned during my—to me—brief absence, and was now engaged in the fiendish delight of his red-handed deeds of violence.

Never flew mortal man a hundred yards as I did that night through the white-bound streets of snow and ice. And, always impulsive, I rushed pellmell through the corridor and into the room, then fell against the wall, stunned with unimaginable consternation.

No Cyrus saw I, nay, I saw a woman, and the one I had least expected at such an unholy hour.

“Mr. Bangs!” rising, “what is wrong?”

I caught my breath at the sound of the familiar voice, then chased the cobwebs from my brain and tried to think collectedly and rationally.

“Mrs. Cassaway,” coming forward to greet her, “I ask an apology for my peculiar conduct.” What the devil am I to say, thought I, as I stood before this delicate woman?

“What has upset you so? You are all a-tremble.”

“Cyrus,” I spurted, then, seeing the flush of



pain cross her profile, I could have torn my tongue from my mouth with a vengeance.

"On account of his wife and my husband?" and her eyes grew large with terror as she slowly rose to her feet.

"Come now, do not be unduly excited," and I tried to rectify my blundering mistake by soothing her with words of comfort, yet the attempt failed, failed completely because I was a bungler where woman was concerned; man, too, for that matter.

"What has happened to Miss Silence?" quaking in her voice as she nodded her head in the direction of the mantel.

"Did you address it?"

"Yes, and received no reply. I have come to believe this place is haunted with evil spirits. Here's the note Wilburt sent me by a messenger."

"So," after reading it carefully, "your husband wishes to see you here, and at such a late hour."

"Sist!" and into my ears she whispered, "Father's here, too, behind the couch in the corner to your right."

I was stupefied. The ramifications of these two domestic quarrels were beginning to get beyond me.

"Won't you be seated?" helping her to a seat.



"Mr. Bangs," softly again, "do you believe that my husband is beyond the recovery of my love?"

"I am afraid so."

Then came sobbing, the heartbreaking and convulsive kind that appears upon its surface to tear a soul from its plastic temple; the kind, dear readers, that makes a man fight the surging desire to take a woman in his strong arms and soothe her troubled spirit with kisses and with love, the which was denied me, so I ground my heel in the soft carpet and tore my hair in frenzy for being an unmitigated ass.

"Come, dear," and I possessed myself of one of her little hands and began to stroke it tenderly, like a grieving brother at the woe of his beloved sister. "Do not weep so."

"Drop her hand, you scoundrel!"

The perspiration, cold as ice, began to ooze from my pores as I managed to face about with aching brain and terrified senses.

"Bangs, you villain!" and the husband of the woman dissolved in tears, trembled with the itch of murder as his hot breath fanned my blanched face. "I've caught you, and if you can wriggle your slimy body from my toils——"

"Then what?"

With an oath he spun around on one heel and



started at the Woman in Purple standing erect before the mantel.

"You! You!" and he started toward her, his spastic lips green with the lust of murder.

"Halt!"

The thunderous command from an unexpected quarter roused my half-paralyzed senses to the knowledge that death was close upon the heels of Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., in the shape of the huge-calibred revolver glaring at him from the hands of the outraged man in the open threshold.

"Do not shoot, Cyrus!" yelled Mrs. Cassaway in terror as she gripped my arms in horror and stared at the dark, swarthy face of my friend.

From behind the portieres came Mrs. Scencio, white to the roots of her hair, drawn from her place of concealment by the intonation of the voice she knew meant death.

Slowly, with eyes glued upon his deadly enemy, the hand of Wilburt Cassaway proceeded to make its way to his hip-pocket, only to be stayed by the voice of the man in the open doorway.

"A move of your hand and you die!"

"To the shame and disgrace of your father!"

Livid with impotent rage, he faced about again, his basilisk-like eyes devouring the sight of his aged sire's face with all the venom and fury of his futile rage.



Then followed silence, sprung from the coffers of doom, whilst devils, imps and hell broke loose and ravaged the soul of him who was my friend and brother, and made of him an orator, a maniac and a would-be murderer.



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE CHASM OF DEATH.

“Woman!”

It sounded like a clap of thunder, this sudden, strident command addressed to Mrs. Scencio, white with terror.

“Come here!”

“Cyrus! Oh, Cyrus!” and I sprang to his side in fear. “For God’s sake, man, remember what you are about to do!” and then I retreated as if stung, the bestial look in his pupil-less orbs bored through my senses with their murderous and repellant glint, and swamped my soul in unimaginable fear and horror.

“Kneel!”

Even as the fear-stricken woman obeyed his harsh injunction, I wondered how he knew that she did so, for his satanic eyes never left the gray face of the man who had betrayed his friendship in acts of violence, vice and crime.

“When the roses laughed in sunshine red and



bright, and whippoorwills crooned to a silver moon—the month was June, love's fondest one, when swathes of sapphire clouds make merry with the crystal orbs of eternal Heaven, and diamond dew descends and lay themselves upon the lulling breast of pansies dry with thirst: saw I when Twilight came to bivouac with fond Nature, an image, whose face and figure, made glorious by the sheen of Innocence, won from me beyond the point of redemption or recovery, the Throne Room of my love. The coral lips of vermilion hue I kissed; on sunset strands of golden tresses poured I the first bloom of my crystallized love; in Cupid's realm was I crowned King by him, with Love my reigning queen. And I was happy. The laughing, skipping seas of opal hue whipped their crested backs in honor of my joys and rolled the tidings of my hopes and aspirations to foreign leas and seas; then penciled mountain tops of sloping green and brown seemed to whisper their felicitations unto us twain as we basked our sunlit hearts in jacinth light that cleft the night from morn, and poured its crystal essence upon my love and I. I loved, I prayed, a slave to Adoration's pew as I feasted my eyes upon the image of my affection and poured my soul into the font of Love triumphant and eternal. Aye, so thought I until Doom's rich coffers came to me with its holocaust of vitrifying despair.



“Saw I, when nocturnal stillness spread its slumbering hold upon old Mother Earth and garbed my nest in blankets dark as ink (seen by my soul though night was hard upon my fold) a noxious weed that reared itself to unknown heights and mocked at me with Friendship’s sign and art. It was a dream, a silent warning that came from other haunts than man, and warned my trusting soul to the Spoiler come to suck the fruit of my animation and rob me of my honor, name, renown. He came, he sought, and conquered, and drove me to the abyss of murder, lust and vengeance. I strove, I fought with all the giant forces known to love; I scaled the battlements of blind Passion and drove to rout the seducer, black as the fringes of eternal hell.

“In crimson forest dells went Love repentant and I forgiving, where Virtue fought its battle with giant Sin, and won a victory pleasing to the saints and angels above the skyline’s dome. And I believed, I trusted and I worked. Made glorious by the sign of this great victory, made strong by the renewal of fond Affection, I felt the stirring of my soul to deeds of greatness and renown, and with Genius, come from her temporary retreat, I painted onyx seas with racing waves that seemed to chase the laughing bubbles from their crested backs and fling a shadow kiss unto a gibbous moon that sat



supreme in a lake of coral blue; and stars, great pearls of watery light, lured my brush to Fancy's greatest height (when as I sat beneath the starlit dome of Paradise, and stilled my heart unto the tingling music of Love's sweetest harp), now forlorn in Misery's bleeding wake, as Genius, come from the gods, is slaughtered on the altar of simon thirst for Vengeance.

"I was a man, a soul had I that thought no evil, nor wished an act of violence to overtake a single son of man. To-day I am a brute, a devil in the guise of lofty man, whilst Vengeance throttles me by the heart and prods my soul to deeds of rashness and of murder. Desperation's crowned supreme within my soul, and mocks my grief with ringing cries that drive me to the deed of which I spoke; whilst cringing howls of fear rise from the hollow of King Death and feast upon my storm-swept senses with prongs of addling heat. I am mad, mad, the madness of an Outrage has eaten into the vitals of my animation, and drives me to the yawning precipice where Subjugation gloats its fill upon the spread of bones, like Vultures upon the stench of a carcass, whither you, Wilburt Casaway, Jr., are to precede my advent and explore this road that leads to Oblivion in Excelsis."\*

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\*With permission from "Betelguese."



"No, no!" and the hysterical wife of the accursed man dragged her half-numb limbs across the floor and clutched his knees in terror.

"Wilburt Cassaway, are you prepared?"

He could not answer. Congealed with fear and horror, and eyes riveted upon the black mouth of the gleaming weapon, he stood in dumb silence, prey to the echo of Doom that rasped from the other man's lips and rang through the room with its frightful resonance.

Then came a scene, the like of which is given but to few men to witness in a lifetime.

"Cyrus Scencio!"

I looked, I gasped, I trembled as if some giant cataclysm were taking place beneath the very floor of the room as I swayed with the motion of my excitement. For I saw, aye, a sight for the gods of Rome and Greece. I saw the proudest woman born to mortal man in all her regal splendor advance upon the man of drunken murder, lust and vengeance; I saw a pair of eyes that shone like heaven's brightest constellations, fixed upon the gleaming ones of him who was insane; I saw a face that vied with heaven's brightest glory in its beauty, a bosom, full and round, that heaved majestically like the gentle swell of an ocean's breast, whilst a well-moulded arm of alabaster hue, and bare to the shoulder, pointed at the man who had



been caught by the unseen force of her who called herself "Silence." Slowly, steadily, like the ceaseless run of water, came she, her terrible beauty fascinating each actor and spectator, her mystical force subjugating even the man of iron and nerve, who had fought this selfsame force to a standstill on a former occasion.

She stood before him now; then, wonder of wonders! I saw her tapering fingers that glistened with the dazzling sheen of costly diamonds, cover the hands of the man, there was a perceptible twitch of his spastic lips, and then he stood weaponless and speechless as the revolver disappeared beneath her bodice.

Those of us who witnessed this unheard of manifestation of magnetic influence, conjury, or what you will, will never forget it though we lived to the ripe age of the Biblical Methuselah.

She spoke not a word, she made no motion with her arm, simply looked toward the door, whereupon Cyrus turned about and left the room with the woman at his heels, closing the door after her.

"Wilburt!" and the old man shook as with the palsy as he staggered to his daughter-in-law and helped her to her feet.

"What was it?" she echoed in awe.

"What, dear?" stroking her hair affectionately.



"That which came from the beautiful lady's eyes and froze us all with terror?"

"I do not know, dear."

"How came she here?"

"You ought to know, son. I am sure that none of us can answer you."

"The figure!" gasped Mrs. Scencio, rising slowly with a wild look in her haunted eyes.

With a terrible oath the young man began to investigate. And in the corner by the mantel he found, standing erect, the figure in wax.

"Wilburt Cassaway, you scoundrel! How dare you libel me as you have done?"

"Bangs, I hate you!"

"So I am led to believe."

"And if you do not leave this room at once I'll use physical force in ejecting you, do you hear?"

"Whose apartments are these?"

"Mine, sir."

"Yours?" incredulously, as I faced Mrs. Scencio.

"Yes, sir."

"Since when? Your husband gave them up several months ago."

"Do you doubt the lady's assertion?" facing me with wrathful eyes.

"I do!"

"Son, son, how can you act so brutal? Have you no love, no pity nor respect for your poor old father



who cradled you in his arms when you were a babe, for the wife you have repeatedly stabbed with deeds and acts of vice and crime?"

"Wilburt, dear," and the frail woman stood before him, "will you not return with me to your father's home and reconcile yourself to the love of a faithful wife and a forgiving father?"

"No."

"You will not?" and the old man really frothed at the mouth with the fury of his impotent soul in the throes of implacable rage.

"By heavens, no! And let this declaration suffice for all time to come. I have carved out the path that I am to follow; the ties that bound me to you," pointing at the cowering woman who was his wife, "I have sundered, and there the subject ends as far as I am concerned."

"You brute!"

"Thanks! I am not beholden to you for a farthing."

"What!"

"I owe you nothing, absolutely nothing. I was brought into this world unsolicited and uninvited, hence the declaration that I owe you no debt."

"I'll have you arrested, you rogue!"

"And pray what for?"

"For leaving your wife in her present delicate state of health, for which offence there is a fine and



imprisonment. And I'll do it, too, by heaven! and that at once. I'll swear out a warrant for your arrest in the next twenty minutes if you do not leave this soulless woman who has fastened her abominable clutches upon your heart and made of you a scoundrel vile as Satan."

"Leave my apartments, sir," and she stamped her foot in shame and anger.

"I will. Wilburt Cassaway, are you prepared to return to your wife?"

"I am not!"

"Everett Bangs, I ask of you as a friend and champion of my daughter-in-law to hasten to the nearest magistrate's office and swear out a warrant for the arrest of Mrs. Scencio at once."

"What for?" simultaneously, from the woman and man.

"For fornication."

Her face went crimson as she receded, as if struck in the face at this terrible announcement.

"Come, Florence, the automobile awaits you right around the corner. Go home at once and await my return."

"Where are you going?"

"Get a warrant for the arrest of your husband."

"Oh, no, no!" and she clung to him in terror, entreating him not to let his anger blind his reason, but he was obdurate.



"Before midnight your husband and that hussy who has been his co-partner in crime will be lodged behind bars; creatures, to all intents and purposes, vile as the slums of hell."

"You will do that!" advancing upon his irate father with clenched fists.

"Remain here and see," and in another moment the three of us were in the corridor, leaving the culprits speechless in the thrall of horror that feasted upon their souls like jackals on a putrefying carcass.

"I want that warrant served to-night, Bangs," shouted Mr. Cassaway, as he got into a hansom, then was driven away, whilst I, teeming with righteous indignation, hastened to the nearest magistrate's office and did as I was commanded, sensing all the while an unholy pleasure and delight in the prospect that I thought awaited the woman who had wrecked my chum's young life.

And, as is ever the case, a woman's ingenuity won the issue. I had but just returned and was in the very act of crossing the apartment house to No. 19, next door, when Wilburt Cassaway and Mrs. Scencio descended the steps with several dress suit cases and entered a large snorting automobile, awaiting them.

"Did you swear out the warrant for your friend's



wife, Bangs?" asked he sneeringly, as he discerned my presence.

"I did, you villain!"

"I hope that you will come to New Orleans then and serve it in person, eh, Janice?" and the next moment the car had turned the corner and was lost to view, their destination being the Crescent City, some thousand miles beyond the jurisdiction of the New York courts, the home of the woman in the case, and the future battleground of this story, where love, intrigue and lust ran rampant with the Gomorrahian lewdness crowned monarch with devil's pomp and glory,



## CHAPTER XVI.

### MARDI GRAS.

In stress of weather a ship hoves to a sheltering port and awaits the passing of the hurricane without; and in stress of trouble a man hies himself to a brothel shop, a club, etc., and souses his senses in swilling down the poisonous concoctions that there are served.

Returning to my rooms I entered my library, and there I saw a sight that disgusted me to the point of despair. He sat in a chair, did Cyrus, a demijohn of whiskey beside him, drunk as a fiddler.

The man was not addicted to strong drink, and, up to that fatal day preceding Thanksgiving, he had been a total stranger to its brutalizing influence; yet there he sat, paralyzed, the very atmosphere exhaling the nauseating odor of a Bowery saloon.

I wished myself and Cyrus dead, and the woman and the man speeding South to a place not exactly cool.



Then followed a vigil that told upon my nerves and strength, and brought me to the verge of a complete mental and physical collapse. Cyrus Scencio developed fever, brain fever, the doctor pronounced it the next morning, having answered my hasty summons.

In my grief and sorrow I longed for comfort and advice, so I sent for Miss Silence. She came, took up the duties of a nurse, and I, idiot, became her humble slave. And the days that were an eternity in passing, ran into one week, then two, and still no visible signs of improvement in my friend, so a professional nurse was engaged, thus partially relieving the terrible strain that showed its effect upon the features of the mysterious woman.

It was Christmas week that an incident occurred that haunted me for many a succeeding day. It was dusk. The nurse had been relieved and the Woman of Mystery was on watch. I had knocked for admittance as was my wont, lightly to be sure, and receiving no response I opened the door as softly as possible and entered.

Before the bed the woman knelt, her hands clasping the helpless ones of Cyrus, weeping as if her heart were wrung with inconsolable grief.

"Is he dead?" I gasped in horror as I tiptoed to her side.

"No. But he soon will be unless we can break



the fever," and then and there she loosed the flood-gates of her tears, a sight that roused my pity as it never had been before by a woman in the throes of sorrow.

"He appears to be breathless!" I whispered in awe as I viewed the spectacle of advancing torpor.

"I'll save him!" rising suddenly and seating herself on the edge of the bed.

"You!" I echoed. "Impossible!" shaking my head mournfully.

"Yes, I."

"You have no thongs wherewith to reach his escaping breath and draw it forth from the yawning abyss of death irrevocable."

"We will see. Magnetic influence saved him from the red hand of murder."

"And it is to save him from the jaws of Death?"

"From Death, and the sorrow that would be mine in such an event. Listen you who appear to love this man with much show of fidelity. I love him too, aye, with all the strength of my tumultuous soul. To me this spurned husband is a god, a lord, a master, for whose love I would barter the heritage of Heaven and sip the quaff of hell eternal. You know not who nor what I am. It matters not. Believe though that I am a woman of ordinary flesh and blood, and that the forces of Nature assert themselves in me the same as in my other sis-



ters; that Sex, the opposite one, please, lures me to its bowered bed and warms my blood with longings, fierce in aspect. I want Cyrus Scencio; I'll have him, his love and what is his, though devils, imps and saints should rise and wage a war with me. And you, Bangs, if you raise a hand to thwart the desire of my soul, court a secret death. Remember this, and beware; remember that I control certain secret forces of Nature, unseen forces that may be put to use in more ways than one.

"Like Cyrus here, the superb affection of my heart, the sublime love of my soul, was slaughtered on the altar of vice by a scoundrel black as Mephistopheles.

"You gasp in horror. Is this intelligence then so fearfully startling, so shocking? Listen: All men are brutes, some are civilized and some semi. You are a brute, as is your friend here, refined ones, sir, men whom the advance of culture and of learning has had a hand in dominating the brutal instinct of your nature. You love, of course. Yes, like a savage beast in the jungles of Asia. For six months, a year perhaps, you are, to all intents and purposes, a gentleman as you court your elected goddess. Then what? The marriage nuptials are read, you go on board a ship or Pullman car, and, ere the virtuous maid recovers from the shock of



love's excitement, you ravage her with simon lust and hellish glee."

"Woman!"

"Have I lied? Is this not an actual fact, sir?"

"Probably in very rare cases it may——"

"In all, all!" and she stamped her foot as she emphasized her fearful declaration. "Love is not as some writers have the nerve to expound. No, sir. He or she who avers that it is the desire to reproduce itself, lies with given intent or unforgivable ignorance. Of the eighty-eight millions of people in the country thirty-nine millions are children, twenty millions men, and the rest women. How many men do you think have their thoughts centered on the face of the babe in prospect, longing for it to be an exact reproduction of the woman they are ravaging with the hell of brute passion? Not one! You, who are unmarried, know, to the shame and sorrow of your soul, that this is so. You cannot love a woman without the damnable desire of lust impinging your senses. In the houses of ill-fame, where prostitutes sell their flesh like Shylocks, you and your like go, pet and kiss the creature that some fiend has ruined and, after having ravaged her anew, you leave, probably to mingle with young damsels of virtue and innocence. What a spectacle for Civilization!"

"I refute the allegations made."



"And why? I saw the terrible lust mount to your own cheeks a few weeks ago, and make of you a raving beast. I saw the hellish glee of devilish desire consume you with its fire as you faced the image of wax and glowed your fill on its seductive nudity with cankerous thoughts that drove your manhood and your honor to the loam of white-heated vice. Deny this, sir!"

I was helpless. This unexpected onslaught of a woman who understood mankind better than myself, who jerked the terrible truth from the secret recesses of one's soul and flung them to one's teeth with the sting of shame and horror, robbed me of the last vestige of expostulation or denial.

With an incoherent excuse I made my way from the room and out into the biting cold, where King Frost bit the cobwebs from my jumbled senses as I began to pace the deserted street, a silent prey to the sting of insidious Conscience and the truth that would not be downed.

For several days I was too ashamed to face my lady of mystery, and only stole into the presence of my chum when I knew that the paid nurse would be in attendance.

And nights, when all was still as the tomb of Death, the fearful accusation of this modern Circe wrung through my mind like a bell in a pellucid atmosphere. "Every man's a brute!"



Yes, after much deliberation and meditation, I am forced to coincide with her asseverations. I am a brute, Cyrus is one, and every other son of man. However this inevitable knowledge did not lessen my brotherly affection for my sick friend, though I may as well confess it, it had a tendency of embittering me against every other man.

Christmas dawned snow-white, and with it came the return of Cyrus' consciousness. I was not at his bedside when he did so, neither was the mysterious woman. However, good news travels equally fast as bad, and so in a very few minutes we were at his side, shaking his hand and wishing him the compliments of the season. To me he was as ever, gracious in his affection and brotherly in his manner; to the woman who appeared to be his Destiny for either good or evil, as the gods should elect, he was non-committal whilst in my presence.

His once robust physique had shrunk until the very bones shown through his skin, and it was decided between the doctor, the woman, and myself, that as soon as he should be improved sufficiently to warrant his removal, that he be taken to a southern climate where he would recuperate much faster than in the frigid zone. Especially was this advice good on account of the Latin blood in the man's veins and the country from which he came.



"Where do you wish to go?" I asked him one afternoon after New Year's.

"To the city of my father's death and the home of Mrs. La Trube."

"And that is?"

"New Orleans."

I had all but forgotten the maiden name of his wife, which was most poignantly revived at his laconic rejoinder.

"New Orleans is not a place conducive to good health, Cyrus, and in your present condition the chances of malaria fever are greatly enhanced. 'Yellow Jack' has a bad habit of making an unannounced entry into the city at almost any month of the year."

"Oh, no, Et'," and he smiled for the first time in weeks. "The fever never reaches the town in the winter season."

I had been talking from hearsay, for I had never been to the city in question. I had an entirely different reason for persuading him from his present inclination, which the reader, of course, can surmise.

The weather was intensely severe. Miss Silence and the doctor agreed, as if by some secret design, that the climate of New Orleans would restore my friend to his wonted good health in short order, so thither we made arrangements to go together just as soon as the doctor should pronounce the word.



It was the second of February that we left New York on the Southern Pacific's palatial steamer *Comus*. I was somewhat surprised at the purser's announcement that all the staterooms were occupied, and, eliciting the cause of this great exodus of Easterners to the Crescent City, I was informed that Mardi Gras and the midwinter racing at City Park were the cause.

And Cyrus, with his artistic eye for the beautiful, basked his soul in the delights of dancing seas and spangled rifts of white-capped waves, of the frolicsome porpoises that raced with the speed of the vessel, and the setting sun that metamorphosed the water into sheets of golden hue and brilliancy.

Seasickness appeared to be an unknown factor on board the ships that ply the Atlantic coast. At least so it seemed to me. Women and children sat on the decks under canvas roofs, and scanned the distant horizon for the sign of a passing ship. Oh, this was a delightful trip, one I fain would not forget were it not for what occurred in the city of palms and swamps.

The Gulf Stream was a constant source of delight to Cyrus. For hours he would sit and watch the glistening waves of India blue roll away from the wash of the ship. And the great Mississippi, the mouth of which is some ninety miles from the city of our destination, gave us much food for



thought and silent reflection. On its banks had been fought many a bloody battle, on its breast had swum and sunk many a cargo of human souls. And, as we passed a bend in the river called "English Turn," the days of my youth returned and I thought of Andrew Jackson and the battle of Chalmette, where the pillaging British in 1814, under the command of Lord Packingham, hurled his fifteen thousand troops against the five thousand Americans, only to fall in battle and have his seasoned army routed by the man of iron and steel.

The river narrowed by degrees, across from Algeria the good ship anchored, and we landed, glad to set foot on old mother earth again.

Probably no hostelry in this country is so well-known as that of the St. Charles at New Orleans. Just why this is so I cannot say. Its cuisine is not that of the very best; its service far from perfect. However, we knew of but one hotel, that the St. Charles, so thither we were driven in a dilapidated carriage, where, after a tedious wait of five hours and ten minutes, we were assigned to rooms at an outrageous advance over its already high rate.

When the inner man keeps me in touch with Nature I have a very good appetite, and am always on the qui vive for news concerning the best place to sate the inner man's longings. And it was but twenty-four hours after we had put up at the hotel



in question, and whilst seated in the palm garden, that I heard the oft repeated news: "Go to Anthony Fabacher's for your grub." Naturally I became inquisitive, and learned that there was a restaurant on Royal street, near Iberia, named Fabacher's, where a German chef titillated the palates of his guests with concoctions unheard of in the touted hostelries. And thither I ate my meals during my entire stay at the St. Charles Hotel, enjoying the music, the never-ending rush for seats, and the delectable cuisine.

The streets were choked with hordes of people in gala attire, for the festivities of this city's holiday were at their zenith. I have seen the Mummers' parade in Philadelphia, another one in St. Louis, the name of which I cannot recall at this writing, and the closing spectacle at Coney Island's carnival, where confetti and that abominable little tickler meets one at every turn of its spangled promenade, all of which are tame and incomparable to the wild, Babylonian glory rampant during the holocaust of New Orleans' Mardi Gras.

The Assyrian spectacles in ancient times were gorgeous, the triumphant processions of Alexander the Great must have been superb, yet the climax of King Rex, with his priceless tunic, and queen with glittering jewels and satins is an overwhelming panorama of sybaritic imagination and



luxury in this twentieth century. The town is loose, unchecked, and running mad with unashamed lust and secret intrigues. In skin-tight costumes, vying with the color of flesh, prance sirens, wenches and prostitutes on sidewalk or the street; in floats of regal splendor rides my madam of the Temple of Vice, bound once a year to show her painted face to foreign and domestic lauks.

If you could resurrect the ancient city of Babylon, bring it to this country and set it in the midst of sedate Boston, those of you who have not witnessed the spectacle of Mardi Gras in New Orleans would get a good idea as to what its barbaric splendor is like. At night, when Virtue should be on guard over every house, giant Sin comes forth from his nocturnal lair and gloats his fill by every known design. The lust of hell has broken its restraining leash; wild bacchanalian orgies make the night a reign of terror to fond Slumber, whilst gilded sirens in their white marble harems make hideous the souls of men who left their wives and daughters at the hotels and rooming houses. Sodomitical vices have broken loose to honor the advent of coming Lent (hell's mockery this), rapine, lust and leisons walk the streets by night and day, and ogle one and all with licentious eyes.

Do I hear a voice of protest from a member of the "Progressive Union," an institution with one



thousand five hundred members pledged together for the advancement of the city's commercial interests? Am I called to task by a loyal New Orleanian for my harsh, almost brutal flaying of your great festival? If so, then digest the succeeding facts:

The town has a population of about three hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants, as follows: Twenty-five thousand negroes, an equal number of true Americans, and the rest a conglomerated concoction of intermarried aliens, French (apologies these), Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards, Jews, and sons and daughters from every face of the globe. Even in business circles is this preponderating foreign element discernible. Take the New Orleans Progressive Union's membership list for May 12th, 1906, peruse the names on the first fifteen pages and you will notice, if you have the patience to count, two hundred and forty-eight foreign names, and this in an organization that foreigners, as a rule, are the very last to espouse!

Here is a town as wholly un-American as one can possibly find from coast to coast. A young man is not respected by his fellow men unless he has a mistress; virtue in a girl is an unnecessary bondage to American conventionality and morality. Make a dollar, that's the motto. If the girls can



make it, thereby swelling the coffers of their soulless sire, good!

Yet, readers, I want you to bear this in mind, that these people, the French preponderating, are not pure-blooded. A mongrel blood is in their veins, brought about by the many intermarriages between them and the other Latin races, which corrupt their moral intellect and levels them to the plane of a beast.

Had Chicago been where New Orleans is after the great fire, the city would be eighteen feet above the river; water-works, instead of the filthy mosquito-breeding cisterns now in every yard, would be installed; and sewers would carry away the nightsoil instead of as now is the case, a cesspool in the back of the house, which, when cleaned every six months, is pumped into barrels and carted through the living rooms.

The few Americans from the East who have gone there for various reasons have tried their utmost to have the legislature pass a bill providing for the raising of the city, and have failed. Where the great bulk of the real estate is owned for many generations by the dirty garlic eating Gascons, as is here the case, and who draw their yearly rental without expending a cent for repairs or improvements on the property, undervalued and undertaxed, it can readily be seen that a storm of pro-



test would come from them the moment that any serious attempt were made to raise the city above flood-tide.

And it is a city, too, where one may not speak his mind, as witness the following:

D. C. O'Mally, a fighting Irishman from Ohio, blew into New Orleans some years ago and purchased an evening paper called the *Item*. For political rascality consign me to New Orleans. Edward Whittaker, inspector of police, became O'Mally's black love. The then mayor, a Dutch son of Israel named Berman, from Algeria, a suburb of New Orleans across the Mississippi, considered himself libeled by the *Item*'s fearless exposure of a game of municipal graft; and, with the help of a judge (nice state of affairs this), antagonistic to the fighting proclivities of O'Mally's paper, pronounced him guilty. The Irishman is a fighter, a thinker and a gentleman; and, probably, after his expiration of eight months, he will reveal to the outside world some startling facts concerning the penitentiary of Louisiana.

To all intents and purposes I found, after a most careful study of the past and present of Edward Whittaker, inspector of New Orleans' police, that the man is an unmitigated scoundrel of the darkest hue. Girls of tender age, from fourteen to sixteen, have been seen to enter his residence on



divers occasions, and remain for hours. Why? What lured them to this man's den? Why did an irate mother call upon him with her daughter, denounce him in scathing language and force a magistrate to issue her a warrant calling for his immediate arrest? The woman was ignorant, dreamed not of the Machiavellian hand of the man she had hoped to bring to Justice's pew. What happened? Simply this, dear readers: He had the court take the girl away from her parent, claiming that the mother was using the innocent child for blackmailing purposes.

And last, but not least, I ask for an answer to this question, to wit: What relationship exists between this same man and a Russian Jew named Meyers, whose New York representative is one Henry Boulanger, he who exploits female flesh for the leprous dens in Chicago, New Orleans, and my home town, New York?

It was in February, 1906, that this son of King Lucifer S. came to New Orleans with his caravan of white slave traffic; not the first time though. One of the innocent lassies objected most strenuously to her new surroundings—a house on Rampart street. Aye, she refused, too, the devilish mandate of the soulless madam, who, thereupon, as was her wont when dealing with incorrigible inmates who dared raise their standard of maidenly



virtue and fight for honor and for name, communicated her troubles to her master. He came, aye, with murder in his eyes came he, locked himself in the room with the terrified lass, and, with brute force roused to frenzy's pitch, broke three ribs of the helpless girl and battered her face into a veritable jelly.

She was sent to the "Charity Hospital" (the records show it) whilst the seducer of women hastened to the friend of his devilish traffic, Edward Whittaker, inspector of police, where the sum of \$400 fixed the impending issue between Meyers and the girl when the latter should be well enough to leave the hospital and seek redress for her frightful wrongs.

She came, a winsome lass with golden tresses and trusting eyes of blue, and poured her tale of woe into the listening ears of the inspector. He was most poignantly overcome with grief and sorrow, this scoundrel black as Satan; he could not help her though in her present misfortune, because she had been living in a house of ill-fame without having paid the customary "License," making use of a technicality in the law, a Law that appears to license prostitutes the same as dogs, a tax levied upon the fruits of flesh the same as if it were a plot of ground.

Politely he informed her of the error of her ways;



politely he proffered her third-class steerage passage back to New York on a ship; reluctantly she accepted the order of transportation, and Mr. Edward Whittaker, inspector of New Orleans police, profited by the transaction to the extent of at least \$380, to the disgrace of his city and the office that he holds.

The foregoing are facts, irrefragable and incontrovertible facts with proofs galore, such ones that, were it in any other city save the one mentioned, the man would be riddled with rifle-shots if he chanced to escape the hands of the Law through a technicality.

A storm of protest will arise, black threats of murder will assail me and the publishers who may possess enough American courage in the corpuscles of their red veins to publish this book unexpurgated. The stench of this one man's crimes rise to the very sky; the white slave traffic which he shields with his vested power cries to high Heaven for vengeance. And Edward Whittaker, beware, for Doom sits poised on the balance of King Chance; retributive righteousness is straining on the leash of Impatience; in the land of snow and ice a die has been cast by the brother of a lass who lost her honor and her soul in the haunts of vice and crime that you have shielded; your mundane days are numbered, and the motto to appear on the panels



of your door is the sign of premeditated Vengeance  
and Justice. Beware!



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE SEQUEL TO KING REX'S BALL.

On the corner of Carondelet and Poydras streets stands a new two-million-dollar hotel, called the New Denechaud, a hostelry that compares very favorably with any in the East. In fact, taking everything in consideration, I claim it to be the finest south of Baltimore, the Jefferson at Richmond, Va., and the Piedmont at Atlanta, Ga., not excepted.

And to it I was making my way to keep an appointment with a new acquaintance, a lawyer from Boston, Mass., with whom I had rubbed a speaking familiarity in the lobby of the Whitney Bark earlier in the day.

The Cuban negro, so dignified in his yellow livery, goatee and pearl buttons, who holds forth in front of the magnificent entrance of the New Denechaud, won my attention immediately by his courtly aspect.

I mention this fact because for a number of



years, ever since my first visit a few autumns ago on a hunting expedition in Halifax county, North Carolina, at a place called Scottlendreck, I and the blackman have been at loggerheads because of the ruthless murder of a brother to one of my friends in the party during the terrible riots at Wilmington, N. C., the fundamental cause of which was the political and moral lawlessness of a semi-educated yellow negro named R. Reardon, now an exile to the former haunts of his knavery (Dock street) and keeping a dirty barber shop in the Paradise of his race (Washington, D. C.) on Tenth street, N. W., block 1,000.

The asinine statement of a Miss Mary White Ovington, of Brooklyn, N. Y., at the recent banquet given by the Cosmopolitan Society of New York, where whites and blacks to the number of forty sat and dined together, that "We (South and North en masse) are going to eat with and stand up for our colored brothers and sisters wherever and whenever we meet them or wherever we can," appears to be the supremest apex of idiocy, unexcelled by any later day speaker save, perhaps, by Harold G. Villard, editor of the New York Evening Post, whose plea for "Social Equality" drew forth a thunderous applause from the black and equalized whites, and Hamilton Holt, editor of the Independent, New York, whose assertion that



“When the negroes get education the whites in the South will have to recognize them as their equals, and that the only solution to the negro problem was intermarriage.” How long would it take Hamilton Holt, Harold G. Villard and Miss Mary White Ovington to change their preconceived ideas on Intermarriage and Social Equality between the Caucasian and Ethiopian races if they lived six months in the Black Belt district?

This liveried factotum treated me with due consideration and respect, ushered me into the beautiful lobby, saw that I was seated and had a bell-boy go in search of my new friend from Beantown, Mass.

And as I thus sat glancing at the men and women who went in and out, I was struck by the aristocratic bearing of a tall man in silk hat and evening clothes, his Kaiser William mustachios waxed and curled to a most beautiful effect, and sporting in his eye an English monocle. Just what it was that prompted me to leave my seat and approach the clerk’s desk I do not know. I did so, drawn by the stranger’s influence and by his military bearing.

Listening to his laconic rejoinder to the clerk I noticed the strange accent in his speech, so singularly like to that of my lady of mystery that I at



once found myself connecting the two in more ways than one.

"It is very strange that he has failed to keep his appointment," said he of the princely bearing. "I am going to the Grunewald and see whether he is there or not. So in the remote event of his belated appearance inform him of my destination," whereupon he left the hotel with yours truly close upon his heels for no other reason than—suppose I say curiosity for the time being.

I soon found that the Grunewald was another hotel a few blocks down Carondelet street. Close upon the stranger's wake I entered, then stopped spasmodically, my face turning a bright red to the very ears. For the latent fears of the past week were realized. Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., shook the man's hand cordially, led him to a nearby seat and soon was engrossed in a voluble colloquy, failing to see me as I executed an adroit flank movement by turning around and entering the large dining-room off to the left of the lobby, only to return in another moment and make my way past the two men, face turned toward the right wall and ears strung to their highest tension.

"And she's dressed in purple?" I heard the man ask of Wilburt as I passed.

Here was a conundrum, a mystery that I must solve, but how? I saw no possibility whereby I



could take a seat next to the two and so overhear the tangible result of their conversation on account of the extreme risk of immediate recognition from Cyrus' one time chum.

At the cigar-stand I halted, replenished my case with Havana weeds, looked at the hotel register for the name of Wilburt and his companion in skirts whom I felt morally convinced was somewhere in close proximity, and, finding that neither had registered of late, I decided to inquire of the clerk.

"I am looking for a friend here, or, to be more concise, friends of an acquaintance of mine."

"Are they registered?"

"No."

"What name?"

"I do not remember at this moment."

"Then I can be of no service to you," and he busied himself with three new arrivals.

I racked my brains for a solution to my dilemma as the clerk was attending to the newcomers' wants, conjecturing as to the name and station of the dignified stranger with young Casaway, and wondering what connection the Woman in Purple might have with him.

"I have seen this friend of my friend but once, yet I believe that I see him at this moment."

"Where?"



"That tall, athletic gentleman in evening clothes over there, talking to that foreign-looking man with the silk hat and waxed mustachios."

"And you do not remember the name?"

"No," and I grew somewhat excited, for the men in question had risen and were walking toward the exit, arm in arm.

"The younger gentleman stopped here with his wife a few weeks ago, and left not ten days ago, moving to the Gray Gables. His name is Cassaway."

"That's the man, sir, the man I'm looking for. I'm a Pinkerton," whispering this startling intelligence into his dumbfounded ear.

"I suspected as much by your queries. Can I be of any further service to you?"

"Yes. Where and what is the Gray Gables?"

"A gray granite building near the corner of St. Charles and Joseph streets, formerly a private residence but now used as a sort of apartment house."

"And the man who was with Cassaway? Do you know who he is, what he is, and where he's from?"

"Yes. He, too, was a guest here for a few days, leaving because of a tilt with one of the waiters and taking up his quarters at the New Denechaud Hotel. His name is Stratskyi. Won't you look at the register?" shoving same toward me.

I did so, and this is what I read: Count Gus-



tave Adelphi Englebert von Stratskyi of Hungary.

Thanking him for the information and handing him a cigar—I believe he informed me that his name was Saux or some such Gascon name—I left the hotel and made my way to the St. Charles, wildly speculating as to the meaning of the mentioning of the Lady in Purple and the chumming of the stranger with Wilburt Cassaway, Jr.

Cyrus and Miss Silence were seated in the balcony watching the throngs of pedestrians surging up and down the street in endless numbers. Across the street, in great, big, glaring type on a white sheet of canvas stretched clear across the Postal Telegraph building was the announcement of the \$10,000 stake to be run for at City Park on a certain day. Every man you met talked races and King Rex's ball, the latter to be given this same night. I saw this person Rex, king of ostentatious extravagance and pampered luxury, a bow-legged, coarse-grained, red-headed individual who was loaded with more whiskey than was good for his equilibrium. And, with the conversation centering on this closing spectacle in the shape of a dozen or more masked balls and the everlasting mentioning of Rex, Comus and Proteus, lesser kings and sybarites of barbaric splendor, until I became disgusted and wished the entire spectacle in a different sphere.



Yet both Cyrus and Miss Silence became fascinated with the never-ending panorama below, and with the desire to attend the ball, which a friendly woman informed us was a most fitting spectacle to the climax of this, the world's most gorgeous carnival.

Were we anxious to attend, and would we go if invitations were procured?

This open-heartedness of the woman surprised me. She came from Richmond, Va., she informed us; also that admittance to the ball of King Rex was only through strict invitations from the city's most exclusive society.

Of course Cyrus and his infatuated companion assented with eagerness, and I with more or less reluctance, for reasons best known to myself.

It was night, preceding Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, and the closing spectacle of this carnival must have been a most pleasing vision to the gentleman called Nick or Harry as he witnessed the closing scenes, so pleasing to his satanic Majesty.

The hall was large and spacious, and the fancy costumes that greeted the eye were a wild riot of imagination that broke the restraining bonds of Chastity and commingled with crowned Lewdness. Women who in ordinary life raised their small voices at the sight of a sweltering man divested



of his coat and vest, danced in tights to the rhythm of a bewitching waltz, revealing every move of the muscles of their semi-nude bodies to the delectation of Passion that feasted on the spoils of conjured thoughts and fancies.

Cyrus did not dance, he could not have done so had he wished, yet he appeared to enjoy himself immensely as he strutted amongst the gay throng in his masquerade of a fifteenth century guardsman; watching with a hawk's eye the whirling figure of a gorgeous butterfly, who was my lady Silence; whilst I, in the garb of a Cardinal, haunted a semi-familiar figure of a chevalier of the seventeenth century throughout the entire ball as he danced a score of times with the nymph-like figure of the butterfly.

A stately prince in purple, too, won my attention, and every now and then he would call a *bon mot* to the glittering queen who danced with me.

The chevalier appeared to me after a quarter of an hour of close scrutiny to bear a striking resemblance to my new acquaintance from Boston, judging from the manner of his carriage and the build of his body. That he should be taken with the airy figure of the butterfly surprised me not.

Several times during a temporary recess it happened that Cyrus and I found ourselves as members of a small group, joking each masquerader



with harmless quips; yet even the voices of the masked men and women betrayed not the identity of the queen, the chevalier, the prince in purple nor the butterfly.

And I became hilarious as the rest with the passing of each hour. I forgot the terrible past, lost myself in the glory of this strange entertainment.

It was at the second last intermission, prior to the one when one and all are given a signal to unmask, that the aristocratic prince announced in a laughing voice to the queen, the butterfly, the chevalier, the guardsman, and myself, the Cardinal, with my partner, a Shepherdess, that we were all to enter several carriages awaiting us at the end of the next waltz and repair to the Palm Garden of the St. Charles, where we should not reveal our identity until after the rendering of the toast.

From one of the men came a protest. I think it was my friend from Beantown, stating that the management of the hotel would object. And when the glittering prince announced that the palm room had been engaged by him for this very occasion and dinner ordered for a dozen couples, we all concurred to the scheme and soon were separated again, the orchestra working overtime with superb renditions of classical music.

I danced with the Shepherdess, a lithe creature who seemed not to touch the floor as I held her



slim waist, flitting here and there amongst the laughing couples as though propelled by aerial wings.

The announcement of the intermission by the cessation of music brought us all in a little group near the entrance of the exit. And at the order of the magnanimous prince we made our way from the hall and to the carriages, four in number, awaiting us.

I was somewhat surprised at the suddenly augmented number of the party. A Court Lady of the Queen Anne dynasty was an invited guest, as were five more women and three men. Probably, thought I, the gentleman who has engaged the palm room and ordered dinner for a dozen couples desires that he have that many guests and so get the benefit of his money. Be this as it may I entered one of the carriages, and before I could discern the one that Cyrus had entered I was rolling on my way to the rendezvous of the mysterious prince in purple.

At the entrance to the palm garden I waited for my chum to come up, desiring, if possible, to share the seat next to him at the magnificently spread table awaiting us.

Cyrus came with the last of the guests, and with him the butterfly, who, it appeared to me, was adverse to the acceptance of a seat at this sumptu-



ous repast. Just what it was I could not determine. However, he evidently persuaded her to accept, for she entered and, contrary to my expectancy, was separated from Cyrus and seated at the first seat to the right of the presiding prince, whilst I sat at the end of one side of the table, and Cyrus across from me, the Shepherdess being my neighbor, and an exquisitely gowned woman in the guise of a fifteenth century court dame, helped Cyrus to divide his attention.

The orchestra, concealed behind a cluster of beautiful ferns and palms, played a Chopin march, the master of ceremonies in the person of the Prince seemed to lavish more or less attention on the somewhat silent butterfly to his right, a fact that caught my attention at once, and one that communicated itself to my friend across the table from me in less than two minutes.

"Guests, friends, and strangers," and the prince rose, lifting a sparkling glass of champagne high in the air, "To the health of royalty in your midst, the Countess Gustave Adelphi Englebert von Stratskyi," and he held the glass to his lips and drank.

A Countess, a real Countess! gasped several of the ladies in consternation.

"Ladies, gentlemen and enemies, to the eternal perdition of the leprous prince in purple!" and she



flung the contents of her glass in the man's face, tore the mask from her face and stood before us. Miss Silence in all the terrible beauty of anger and of hatred that appeared to enhance her loveliness until it dazzled the eye.

Simultaneously came the order to unmask, to be succeeded by rampant excitement in each and every breast.

The Prince in Purple was the Count with the outlandish cognomen, the Chevalier one Wilbert Cassaway, Jr., the queen the ex-wife of Cyrus, and the rest of the members strangers to me and my chum.

And the fury that lit the eyes of the Count was terrible to behold.

"My wife, friends," pointing at Miss Silence as an ugly smile mantled his thick lips.

The sheath of Cyrus' sword rattled against the table as he drew himself erect, and with flame-lit eyes, surveyed the white face of his runaway wife.

"In the palace of your King you lavished your lewd love upon the women who caught the eye of your mercurial fancy; in the castle of your fathers, where saintly dames had reared their blessed offspring for generations, you turned the night into bacchanalian festivals, and camped with Sin to the sorrow of my soul and the babe that was to come. Wrecks of womanhood you sought in the



slums of glaring Lewdness, brought them home, and installed them as your mistresses in the apartments that belonged to me, your wife.

"When drunken carousals made the day and night a reign of terror, and open incests flung their insults to the battlements of Queen Virtue, I left the haunts of vice and crime and returned to the home of my parents as you feasted on the splendid poison of Hell, and I on sorrow, tears and sighs that stormed my soul by legions.

"By all the vices known to the science of Sin, you outraged the honor of the woman you had sworn to cherish and to keep; by all the tokens of lust and moral depravity, you slaughtered the one glorious affection of my heart and turned my soul to channels, fierce in Aspect's thrall of clamoring vengeance. You sought to make of me this night a creature vile as those with whom you caroused long into the darkened night, yet for the nonce your premeditated designs have been frustrated. Deny this if you can, you villain!"

"Ladies and gentlemen," and I raised my hand so all could see it. "As a friend of the Countess von Stratskyi, and on account of the unpleasantness that has so suddenly marred this social gathering, I ask that all leave this room save the Scencios, the Stratskyis and Mr. Cassaway."

And as the strangers filed out of the room,



young Cassaway turned to me and hissed the startling news:

"There are no Scencios, you rogue. The former wife of your friend became Mrs. Cassaway at Key West, Florida, three weeks ago."

I saw a deadly pallor mount to Cyrus' eyes and cheeks at this brazen news, a dark glow rise to the eyes of the Count, and an impassioned glint in those of the Countess as the silence hung above us like the pall of Doom.

"The last time that I heard of you, Countess, you were living incognito at Charleston, South Carolina."

"From whence I went to North Dakota, because the former state is the only one in America that grants a suffering wife no divorce from a bestial husband."

"You are my wife, belong to me for better or for worse; and the dowry in the shape of priceless jewels that you absconded with when you fled my castle and the state of Hungary, is mine, by virtue of the terms governing the marriage contract between us two. And I will have them, too, or know the reason why."

"So!" and if a look could have killed a man the Count would have been a dead one then and there; for, all the latent venom of this strange woman rose to the fore and spent itself without



stint in the look that devoured the scoundrel before her.

"Yes. And do you know how I will succeed?"

"No. It does not interest me in the least, seeing that you are at your old tricks again."

"Yet I will tell you. In the state of Louisiana a man is absolute master. The law allows him to go to his wife's bank and withdraw therefrom the last farthing deposited in her name, permits him to sell the home and its contents over her head, grants him, as Lord and master, as is but right and just, the privilege of disposing all tangible effects belonging to his wife if he so sees fit."

"Then the law is an outrage, a survival of ancient and barbaric times," stamping her foot in consuming wrath.

"Gentlemen of my standing do not think so."

"Gentlemen of your standing! How dare you call yourself such an one?"

"You still possess some of your American proclivities."

"Yes, and thank God that it is so. You and your like are titled knaves, unprincipled rogues, who after having squandered your father's patrimony at the gaming tables at Monte Carlo and wild debauchery in the gilded haunts of vice in Paris, London and Budapest, resort to the replenishing of your coffers by marrying young and unsophis-



ticated American girls, whose mammas possess more money than brains. And it is an undying shame to the true sons and daughters of Liberty to learn that in the cities of New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago, groups of foreign men are banded together for the sole purpose of bringing about these international marriages by the loaning of vast sums of money to the heiress-hunting titled profligates, and introducing them to the spotted prey, as, for example, you and I were introduced and married in the city of Chicago some years ago."

"This is an untruth, ladies and gentlemen."

"How dare you, a sodden rake, question my veracity? Only a few days ago a metropolitan paper of New York exposed this state of affairs by exploiting the mission of the Count Bartolomeo Venier of Venice, who had the monumental egotism to admit that he was on the hunt for a rich American heiress, inadvertently admitting that there existed in the city of New York, a group of men who habitually assist titled snobs in their soulless pursuit of American fortunes by way of the altar."

"I deny the allegations made, and protest against the issue at hand as it is apt to stir up bad feelings between my friends and I."

"Deny this then if you can: Antonia Ferara,



of No. 193 Grand street; F. A. Garranmone, of No. 173 Mott street; J. Molea, a banker, and G. Restiano, a caterer, the latter two of Grand street, and all of New York, are the principal ones who lend their aid in the marital hunt for American wealth, and profit by the transaction to the extent of thousands. This man Ferrara and his associates have advanced thousands of dollars to broken-down Counts of no account.

“Did not Count Bartolomeo Venier, a member of one of the most ancient families of Venice, when he came from a fruitless hunt in Philadelphia to New York, candidly admit that he was in search of a wealthy wife? And did he not admit without the least show of hesitancy or shame that he was being assisted financially by New York merchants, as his own family was not in a position to supply him with the necessary funds for the successful completion of his lucre hunt?

“The merchant—foreigners as their names imply—and those impoverished rakes whom they assist, regard such transactions in a purely business way, hence the total absence of any show of pure love. International marriages are matters to be discussed calmly and the benefits to be derived by either contracting party weighed, the good American gold by the snob who has a handle to his name, and the hapless girl the empty title



that cannot procure for her a morsel of bread were she starving after the man has squandered her last farthing.

“And these men delight in boasting that this country is the only one in which such mesalliances can be successfully promulgated with consummate skill, that the wealth of the bride, if she is an European subject, will not excuse a nobleman for marrying out of his tinsel class, but—listen you—that the American girls are looked upon in a different light.

“‘All over Europe,’ said the Count Venier, ‘an American girl is regarded as if she belonged to a titled family, and that a nobleman does not lose caste if he marries her.’

“This is rank folly. Daughters of Liberty are looked upon as chattels, are treated most egregiously and, only tolerated by Society on account of the boughten handle prefixed to their names.”

“This is an outrage, an insult to my ancestry.”

“Listen you: In a recent newspaper article Mr. Ferara stated that he is very proud of the benefits that he has been able to bestow and of the number of worthy (?) young men that he and his clique have assisted. He said that he was always glad to help the fine young fellows of old titled families (?) who come here to better their fortunes. Having made his own money here, he



desires to see other foreigners succeed. Many of them have spent their fortunes before sailing to the land of dollars and cents, and, being accustomed to having plenty of money—like yourself, for instance—a little backing in the way of a loan of \$10,000 or \$15,000 gives them a new lease on life, and enables them to win a wealthy wife.

“And the most disgraceful thing in all this business is, that your friend Count Bartolomeo Venier, of Venice, announced that he was not at all ashamed to have it known both by the press and public, that he was on a hunt for a rich American heiress.

“‘His family is illustrious,’ said he, ‘I have with me certified copies of my title’—you had the same—‘My coat of arms is surmounted by the Cap of Doge, one of the very few in Italy that have such distinction. One of my ancestors, Admiral Sebastian Venier, was one of the heroes of Venice and a man whom the city was proud to honor,’ which means that he is the Season’s greatest matrimonial catch, that a thousand mammas are angling for him with bags of glittering gold, that an unsophisticated, red-blooded American lassie will eventually marry him, and in a few years return to the land of Stars and Stripes and seek redress from his wanton cruelty through the agency of



the divorce courts, just as hundreds before her, and I, have done."

"You?" furiously as he clenched his fist in simon rage.

"Yes, I, and as every other American girl will do who links her life with the broken-down bums and scalawags of titled lineage, men unfit for association with common laborers and factory hands."

News Item: Personal effects of the illustrious Prince Victor of Thurn and Taxis, Count of the Austrian Empire and Margrave of Bohemia, attached by bailiffs on the complaint of a money-lending matrimonial agent:

Three suits of clothes (much worn).

Two dinner jackets.

Two evening suits.

Four suits of underclothes.

Eight shirts.

Twenty-six handkerchiefs.

Two overcoats.

A leather valise.

Sundry toilet articles.

Three canes (one with a gold head with the Prince's arms engraved thereon).

A silver cigarette case, and

Four scarf pins (one with an imitation



pearl), the value of the aforesaid articles being appraised at \$100.

The above seizure was made on the complaint of Fraulein Helmina Kemper, a German maiden of uncertain antecedents. She came to Paris fifteen years ago and became naturalized. Since then she has been known to those princes of one kind and another desirous of marrying American girls. She claims to have financed Prince Victor when he visited New York in search of an heiress. It was hoped at that time the Prince would capture Miss Gladys Vanderbilt. When his friends found he wasn't succeeding they clubbed together and raised money to send the Countess Clare over to help him out, as she claimed to have influential connections in American cities.

Unfortunately, American society refused to swallow the Countess. She is an English woman whose real name is Mrs. Crossley. The title is quite apocryphal. Countess Clare left America in disgust, and the Prince, instead of capturing an heiress, was captured by Josephine Moffit, an actress, who claims to have married him after a fashion.

Fraulein Kemper relates in her complaint full details of Prince Victor's campaign for a Yankee bride.

According to her story, Countess Clare came to



her accompanied by Count Zaltynsky and asked her to back the Prince. She said Prince Victor had been engaged to Miss Paine, daughter of the late Governor Clinton Paine, of Baltimore, but that now he believed he could do better and secure Miss Vanderbilt. Fraulein Kemper advanced first \$10,000, then \$9,200, taking as security seven-seventeenths of manganese mine concessions situated at Lavanowaka, Russia.

In February, 1906, Countess Clare and Zaltynsky told Miss Kemper the Prince was about to begin work in the mines and, also, conclude the marriage, and that more money was necessary. She gave him \$22,275, and in March another sum of \$34,200. In April, while Prince Victor was in New York she sent him through Zaltynsky \$1,000. In May she gave up \$20,000. In June, \$16,000. In November of the same year, \$7,000. Still the Prince did not bring the marriage off. Then, losing hope, she appealed to the courts.

When the bailiffs seized Prince Victor's garments in his rooms at the Hotel de France et de Choiseul he sent a friend offering \$40 for the return of his clothes as he could not find shelter in another hotel, but Fraulein Kemper refused, who said:

"He begged for his bag and his evening clothes at least, so that he could leave town, as he knew



that Josephine Moffit was on his trail. He fears she will throw vitriol on him, and he knows she is on her way from London full of wrath and courage. I hope she gets him. I have only sued for \$2,000, as his notes have not yet fallen due."

Fraulein Kemper is not the only financial backer of penniless noblemen in their attempts to secure American heiresses. The best known is a New York maiden lady connected with an historic Fifth avenue family who has for years kept a kind of matrimonial agency. She introduces heiresses for a commission which is fixed in advance and paid after marriage.

The tailor who lent Count Boni de Castellane the money for his first visit to New York when he captured Anna Gould recently showed a special correspondent of a New York paper a long list of titled men willing to marry American girls. Among them were the Prince de Lecca, of a Corsican branch of the Colonna family, who has no money and plenty of bad habits. His nephew is also in the market and was reported engaged to Miss Ingraham, of No. 104 Avenue de Champs Elysees.

Others on the list were the Duke de Montmorency, the Comte de Chateaubriand and the Comte de la Fayette, who has ten children; the Vicomte de Richebourg, who has no



money, and Prince Orloff, the fattest and fastest prince in Europe. He lately informed his friends that he was engaged to Miss Stackelburg, daughter of a Western millionaire, but it seems to have been a dream. Another nobleman whose name was on the list is the Count Jacques D'Aubigny. He is known as "the drawing-room microbe," so persistently does he hunt for heiresses. He has no money, and his descent is illustrious, but it is said that Miss Gertrude Hamilton will marry him as soon as she is of age, in spite of the opposition of her mother, the Baroness Graffenried.

Most of these men depend upon tailors, money-lenders or matrimonial agents to finance them during the expensive campaign of heiress-hunting. The Prince Varies, a nobleman whose recent marriage interested New York, agreed to pay a commission of \$40,000 to a society woman who brought about a match.

Either these foreign parasites are imbued with colossal nerve and lack all remnants of decency, or our American heiresses are a lot of brainless,

In view of the impending marriage between Anna Gould and her penniless Count de Sagan, it may interest some people to hear the lady's comment relative to the wild scramble of our Amer-



ican heiresses for foreign titles. To quote her verbatim:

"We Americans love French society because of the shortcomings of our own. (How remarkable!) To me France is the incarnation of the highest possibilities of elegance. Aristocrats' titles attract American girls because we have not got them at home. I married a French aristocrat because I thought him the embodiment of finesse, of high life.

"Of course, I was disappointed; but I saw Paris and learned that it doesn't do to differ from other people.

"Paris never saw me as I am. I was content to devote myself to my children; I gave up my money royally, and, for the rest, sentenced myself in silence.

"One has to learn. I came from a country whose high society differs in every way from the French noblesse. At home woman spends the money that the man earns.

"If a French aristocrat marries one of our heiresses he expects her to be his banker. This wife-banker must invest all her money in an enterprise over which she has no control and that often yields her but a scant percentage. American girls, as a rule, do not see this side of the medal, but when it is brought home to them, in time—oh, how it hurts!



“Mainly because they want to rise above the American mode of life, American girls seek European marriages—that is, marry titled foreigners.

“In the material things, in honesty and solidity of purpose, the American man has no equal. We know that, we women do, but, nevertheless, turn to Europe in quest of the ideal man. On the old continent, we persuade ourselves, dwells the hero of our girlish dreams.

“I know now that this hero of our imagination is more often than not but a gilded and beribboned manikin, but women will never believe it until they have found out for themselves. The man who bestrides his horse so elegantly, the cavalier of most enchanting manners—how could he be capable of covetousness or intrigue? Nothing surprises an American heiress whose marriage to a titled foreigner turns out badly, more than the fact that her exquisite consort lacks heart, that muscle from which all our happiness should flow.

“Curious, is it not? The French aristocracy, conserved in its own ice, plays upon the imaginations of American heiresses by the very characteristics it most conspicuously lacks. I knew quite well when a girl that not all French noblemen were jewels that the revolution forgot to destroy. Yet the charm of the first real cavalier I met captivated me.



“To ensnare American girls a titled foreigner must be a past master of gallantry, the glass of fashion, an exquisite in every polite pursuit. If he hasn't these qualities in the highest essence, then we prefer a practical, diligent, solid American.”



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### WHEN NATURES CLASHED.

The biting sarcasm of this fearless woman stung the man with appalling fury, and sealed our individual lips as the bridling rein of fear swept our hearts and minds with unimaginable horror.

"I was your wife; aye, to the sorrow of my heart and soul. You followed me throughout Europe when the coffers of your safe were at their lowest ebb. To America you came, and with the help of sleuths, you succeeded in making my life another reign of terror, and yours the equal to that led in Europe, if not worse."

"I did not. I sought a reconciliation on account of the son that was born to us, and whom you spirited from our home and tried to conceal from me, causing me the keenest of anxiety."

"What know you of anxiety, of father-love, or affection? Nothing! It was at Newport News, Virginia, where I was staying at the Arlington Hotel and you at the Lexington, that you openly dis-



graced yourself beyond the shadow of redemption by forming a pool with a clique of soulless men of like ilk whilst the first Carnival was in town, and where votes for the most beautiful and accomplished maid were bought at so much per, the girl having the largest number of friends securing the greatest number of ballots. And, Count, who was it that secured these much wanted votes to be elected queen of the Carnival, brought about by the formation of this pool, where hundreds of dollars were spent in purchasing these much prized ballots?

“A red-headed siren named Nanny Gordon, madam of a patronized temple of Sin. And, when this outrageous revelation came to the ears of a respectable society debutante, and she, in her justifiable anger telephoned to the wanton in question inquiring whether she had lost all remnants of respectability by accepting these boughten ballots, you, Count, instructed her to answer as follows: ‘I have been voted the Queen of the Carnival and expect to be crowned. The only difference between you and I is that I advertise my business and you don’t,’ a fitting rejoinder and spectacle from the scoundrel who was my husband, and the concubine who had robbed him of his honor and respect.”

“I’ll—kill—you!”

“Retract, sir!” and I snatched the helpless sword



from the hands of my inanimate friend and rushed at the villain in a frenzy of wrath.

"I call upon you, Mr. Cassaway!"

"A man as vile as yourself! Retract!" pushing the point of the sword to his breast.

"I retract, sir."

"For the first time in your life, Count."

"I wish to see my son."

"His grave is in the Episcopal cemetery at Newport News, Va."

"A heathen cemetery!"

"A Christian one, sir."

"Was he baptized?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"An Episcopal minister."

"What! You had my heir baptized by a Protestant minister? and I'm a Catholic, a devout son of the Pope!

"A devout son of Mephistopheles, Count. Religion occupies your thoughts just about as much as the study of psychology does the frivolous maids of our smart society."

"Oh, this disgrace! this everlasting disgrace!" and a genuine tear shone in this louk's eye as he tore his hair in grief at the superstitious belief that his son was lost for all ages to come because a Catholic minister had not baptized it, a hideous example



of foreign aristocratic knaves who treat their American wives like savages in the Fiji Islands, and raise a howl of protest if the child is not entered in the church of their fathers' faith, though they themselves never practice the precepts of their religion nor venerate the laws of morality, nor hark to the dictates of conscience.

"And you are married!" I heard Cyrus ask of the woman who had so nearly wrecked his life.

"I am."

"Are you divorced?"

"Most assuredly."

"On what grounds did you secure your separation?"

"Incompatibility of temperament."

"And you married Wilburt Cassaway?"

"She did. What have you to say against it?"

"And you secured a divorce also?"

"I did."

"On what grounds?"

"Infidelity."

"You lie!" and the Countess struck the villain squarely in the face with all the force at her command.

"Were you a man——"

"I would kill you. A most fitting companion of the scoundrel who was my husband."

"Mrs. Cassaway, the state of New York will not



recognize your divorce nor will it take notice of your marriage. And should you and your husband come to New York and register at a hotel I could have you both arrested."

"The prospect of which is very remote, you meddler. The South suits us very well indeed. And, as this is the city of my wife's birth, we expect to make it our future home."

For several minutes then there was deep silence, each occupied with the thought uppermost in each individual brain. And as I thus stood facing the Countess, the pall of this sudden silence reminded me of another occasion not so many weeks ago when the room we were in was as silent as a charnel house as the tragedy enacted by an insane man had its animation congealed by a power that seemed supernal. And as this same scene reviewed itself in my mind, I faced about, only to stare in blank amazement at the strange spectacle before me.

The haughty prince in purple had been trapped, the same as Cyrus and I had been, by the fascinating power of the woman who had been his wife.

Slowly, but surely, his knees gave way; now he knelt prone upon the floor with his head bowed as if in supplication.

"Kiss the hem of my gown!"

And as he did so Wilburt Cassaway grabbed his



wife's hand and fled from the room as if in mortal fear of the potency of this woman's mysterious force.

"Do you love me?"

"I do."

"How much?"

"I adore you."

"Like a savage beast its brood. Count Stratskyi, you noble profligate, sprung from the bowels of hell and weaned by a devilish siren, I hate you with all the strength of my soul."

"Wherefore I adore you, and am slave to your every whim," bowing his head until it touched the floor.

"Get out of my sight before I lose the grip upon the floodgate of my passion and slay you with the steel hid beneath my bodice."

"I obey!" and the hypnotized man actually crawled on all fours and fled from the room, leaving me the sole witness to a scene that fascinated me with its divine spectacle of Thespian art enacted between this dominating woman and my artist friend.

"Cyrus!" and she came around the table toward him as he slowly receded from her, a changed light in his eyes and color in his face as if denoting fear.

"Cyrus, dear!"



“Stand!”

Struck dumb by this new role between these two malcontendants, I remained where I was, dreading something that I could not define.

“I love you, Cyrus, love you with all the pent-up fire of my soul that has been seared with the burning desire rampant in it since the first day of our meeting.”

“And I hate you!”

“Oh!” And she shrunk back a few paces as if she had been stabbed.

“You lured me from the temple of moral Rectitude and fed me with the spoils of cankerous thoughts and unholy love.”

“You dragged from me the slumbering longings of what is bred by love, and turned my once placid existence into a furnace of white-heated longings that sapped me of my strength and crowned me slave to passion’s bond.”

“And all the while you hid from me the knowledge that you were married, that you had been a mother, and that you were a member of Hungarian royalty.”

“My past belongs to God and me, and concerns you not.”

“Why stab me then with the fire of your storming soul?”

“Why spurn the priceless homage of a longing



soul that would stake its eternity for the salvage of your love?"

"I want it not."

"Oh, yes, you do," coming toward him again with staring eyes.

"Bangs, your sword!" and ere I knew how to find my tongue he had sprung to my side and snatched the sword from my helpless hand.

"Cyrus, love."

Again the tone of her voice was low and musical, just as on that former occasion when she had subjugated him, though all the impotent fury of the infernal regions had been consuming him with their terror.

"I want you, Cyrus, love."

"And I want you not, for you are false, false as the woman who nearly murdered my soul with her acts of glaring vice."

"Am I then so repulsive to you, dear?"

"I am not dear to you. The alabaster sheen of your arms, neck and face, together with the glowing tresses of your golden hair, and sylphlike body, only provoke me to-night to animosity's exalted apex, caused by the sudden revelation of what and who you are, of what you were to that foreign dog whom you hypnotized with your devilish eyes."

"And yet I love you."



"And I hate you. Stop looking at me with your penetrating eyes of basilisk hue."

"They dance with rapturous ecstasy and love for you, my Cyrus."

"Bangs! Bangs! Stop her, stop her!" And in his insane fear he fell over a chair, scrambled to his feet, looked at the woman to see whether she had advanced or not, then literally froze in his tracks, eyes riveted upon those of his enchantress and fighting the greatest battle of his mundane life in trying to break the fearful spell of her who swore to bend his stubborn will to her whim and fancy.

"Cyrus, love, why do you spurn me?"

"Great gods of Rome! Bangs! Bangs! save me!" though why he called to me I do not know, seeing as he must have that I, too, was caught in the herculean thrall of a force against which I could not combat nor, for that matter, save him.

"You who have roused my heart and soul to Frenzy's pitch, listen: There is no more need of your fighting against the unseen forces that have been battling with your mind. Sooner than force you to reciprocate the superb affection of my heart I will leave you and allow you to go your way unmolested. Do you desire this?"

"I do."

"And why?"



"Because you are unnatural."

"And fear me?"

"And fear you as Satan does the sign of virtue."

"You are brutal."

"I am."

"And every man's a brute."

"You have learned your lesson, Mr. Bangs, and have not forgotten it, I see."

"You, Bangs!"

"Yes."

"Am I a brute?"

"A simon one."

"And pray what are you?"

"A bestial one."

"Great Jerusalem! Are you, too, caught by the snare of this unearthly woman, this tigress in the shape and form of Hecate?"

"A woman who can read your secret thoughts and bend you to her will despite the prayer of your frightened soul."

"And make of me a driveling idiot and slave to passion's lust."

"And make of you a slave to Cupid's bowered dell. Yet, though I desire such, though my heart be set upon the attainment of this sweet Elysium, I would not bring it to pass by the application of any other agency than that of wooed affection," and as she spoke a shadow crossed her face, like



the mantling of the moon by a sweeping cloud, that drove the light from her sparkling eyes and streaked the dazzling beauty as if a darting lance had cleft the eternal skies above and pierced her storm-swept heart in twain.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE KISS OF FIRE.

The chaos of riot and disorder in my mind was stilled with awe as these two warring elements eyed each other in silence. So precipitately had the forces of their respective natures clashed that it appeared to me both had been robbed of their otherwise biting assaults of tongue and spastic expletives that seem to shoot from the lips of my hot Southern friend like fire from the mouth of a belching volcanic crater.

And then this strange woman of mystery, of destiny, and of dazzling beauty, swayed to and fro as if rocked by a giant cyclone that sprung from the secret bowels of Nature's buried limbo, and ravages both sea and land with the fury of an ancient despot.

"I thought, did I, that I had found succor for my loveless heart, yet I awake to find that I have stumbled upon the lair of a jackal!"

"Woman!"



"Man! You goad me to the fury of murder," and like lightning her jeweled hand shot forth from beneath her bodice, clutching a deadly stiletto.

"Oh, I'm mad, mad, driveling mad, with the madness of an idiot," and Cyrus dropped into the nearest chair and covered his eyes with his hands, shaking with dry, convulsive sobs.

"I have scaled the rock-ribbed crags of hell, fought my way to the battlements of Paradise, scoured the desolate wastes of an eternal voidness for the sign of love and peace, and this is my reward, my doom!" sobbing low and pitifully.

"I cannot stand these tears and moanings," leaping to his feet and approaching the woman. "Silence!"

"I want you not, brute!"

"Answer me this one question: Are you free?"

"Yes, so free am I that you have insulted me without impunity."

"Forgive me, dear."

"I will not."

"May I kiss your hand, the sign of which shall be that I am repentant?"

"No."

"I'll force you, then, by my devotion."

"The which I'll trample under the heel of vengeance as if it were a vampire."

"You will, eh?"



"I will. I want the receptacle of my former affection, that little bearded man there, who is a gentleman, though he calls himself a brute."

The green-eyed monster of jealousy shot to his opaque eyes and began to toy with his heart and senses, to the supreme delight of this vowed sorceress and the unloosed concomitant of Mephistopheles.

"Bangs, you unmitigated villain!"

"Quite a superlative compliment, Mr. Scencio, especially to your lifelong friend and companion."

The satire of this woman stung one like the bite of an adder, and made of man an idiot, raving mad though helpless.

"I am innocent, Cyrus, believe me."

"Woman, you drive me mad, stark mad!"

"And you, you abominable hypocrite; you have scuttled my love on the shoals of despair."

"I want you!" savagely, as he bit his mustache in rage.

"And I you."

"Me?" incredulously.

"Cyrus, love!"

"Then this, the kiss of fire, as a sign of our betrothal."

"Then this, the sign of which is the surrender of your love," and into each other's arms they fell and kissed but once, aye, a kiss that ought to suffice



them throughout life and eternity, for it was truly a kiss of fire, long-drawn, burning, and only terminated by the loud banging of the door as Count Stratskyi entered, livid with rage.

"Release the woman!" he shouted raucously, as he advanced in bestial strides upon the two.

"At whose command?" asked Cyrus, as he eyed his new antagonist unflinchingly.

"At mine, you whelp!"

"And by what virtue?" from the woman, disengaging herself from the embrace of her lover.

"That of being your husband."

"Did I not inform you that I had divorced you?"

"I do not believe it. And, even were this so, I count upon your remarriage with me in the very near future."

"For personified egotism, Count, you have no equal."

"I am talking from experience."

"And, pray, is it your own?"

"No. However, the past reports of your American Countesses and Duchesses are good criterions to go by."

"To which I am an exception. Now leave me, otherwise I shall be compelled to call upon the physical assistance of my two friends here, who, I feel convinced, would be delighted in showing you the door."



"You will hear from me again, woman," and with a muttered oath he turned and left the room.

The man must have been trading on the knowledge of the matrimonial escapades of the American Countess Eugenie de Rilly, thought I, she who divorced her Grecian titled lord, married a western man, lived with him six months and divorced him, because, as she avers, "though a Count may be pretty bad, he at least possesses good manners and is a gentleman." Paradoxical as it may appear to the average sons and daughters of Liberty, this daughter of the Stars and Stripes announced that the men of her mother country were bores, rude in their manners, and that she wanted her Count back again, and the reports have it that she's about to remarry him and return to Greece, where "all the men are gods and have such perfect manners," and where I hope this creature will remain forever, even her bones, for she is no true daughter of Liberty, and by her miserable conduct becomes an eyesore to those of us who believe that chivalry in men is yet extant, the announcement of the Countess Eugenie de Rilly and others of a like ilk to the contrary notwithstanding.

Excusing myself, I made my way from the room, divested myself of the royal robes of Church, hastened across the street and dispatched a long cablegram to Wilburt Cassaway, Sr., New York, then



promenaded up and down Canal street, mentally diagnosing the night's events, and the sudden knowledge of the identity of she who had called herself "Silence." Just what relation I would bear in the future between her and Cyrus was more than perplexing to me. I even pondered the possibility of their marriage in the immediate future, though to me they appeared as unsuited as any two couples that I have met in all my wanderings. I doubted, too, the advisability of such an alliance. I weighed in the balance of my retrospect and prospect, all that I knew of these two strange beings, what had occurred, and what might take place, with the result that I found myself strenuously opposed to the plausibility of a matrimonial alliance between the two.

Cyrus was in bed when I returned nearly two hours later, and having nothing else to occupy my mind for the present, I did likewise, though it was well toward morning ere I fell asleep.

Cyrus had not too much of the world's goods, probably \$900 in all; I had even less, and what my adorable Countess possessed was yet a mystery. And this state of our financial affairs being made known to my friend after breakfast at Fabacher's, we decided by mutual concurrence that we were eating into our reserve at a prohibitive rate of extravagance to such an extent that we had to retrench



immediately, so I proposed a suite of rooms; he concurred, whereupon we sallied forth on a rent-hunting expedition.

I had thought that the rents in New York City were high, yet, after a few inquiries, I decided that they were ridiculously low compared to the outrageous ones we met this morning. For a single room, cheap furniture and furnishings, \$75 and \$100 was demanded, and, strange as it may appear, the price rose one-half in excess of that already named when two were to occupy the room.

These French Shylocks are experts in picking out a stranger, especially an Easterner, and as the town is but a six months one, the rents are saddled on the prospective victim to such an extent that their expenses incurred during the six months of depression are fully covered. And yet, strange as it must appear after digesting the above, nobody appears to pay any rent after the first of May.

Near the Fisk Free Library, on Prytannia street, facing Lee's monument, was a beautiful residence where we secured two suites of rooms at a rental of \$450 per month, the best suite for my lady of magnetic force, and the other one for ourselves. All this, mind you, without taking the lady into our confidence.

And how she laughed and teased Cyrus that



same day when he informed her of what we had done.

"Cyrus, dear, do you not know that I am a real Countess?"

"I have not forgotten it, sweet."

"Well, sir, do you not know that a Countess has bags of good American gold, otherwise, how could she become a Countess? Neither you nor Mr. Everett have ever heard of a poor American lass being wooed by a real foreign Count, have you?"

"No, nor anybody else, for that matter," replied I, with more or less show of vehemence.

"A legacy from an old aunt came to me some eight months ago in the shape of a lifelong annuity amounting to \$27,000 a year. Could you live on this amount, Cyrus?"

"On the interest on the interest, dear, if you were my star of hope and love, the guiding hand to lead me to the highest rung of fickle Fame and its sister Renown."

"That is easy."

"Yes, provided you know the way."

"I do, and I intend to show you how."

"Then haste, for I am all eagerness to commence this herculean task."

"What subject do you expect to paint?"

"Venus taking her bath."

"Why not the rosy-fingered Aphrodite?"



"I have my reasons. And may I not paint the subject of my prospect, the subject that I painted on a former occasion, the model whose body was 'coarse-grained, and sporting limbs like the shanks of a goblin'? I'll paint, and the model for this new conception of dame Fancy has engaged herself to me for love's sweet sake. What more can I wish?"

"A continuation of your present mood."

"That I may commence my subject at once and not lose any more time, suppose that we pack our belongings and move to our new quarters?"

And acting on this advice we did so, though it took us all of three days to get properly settled in our new environment and to adapt ourselves to the constant society of each other, pleasant whilst the novelty was new for Cyrus, and—but that would be telling in advance of other things that must be related in their logical sequence to this tale.



## CHAPTER XX.

### A TRYING ORDEAL.

It was the fourth day after our advent to our new quarters that I left Cyrus busy with the preparation of his paints and canvas and hurried to the L. & N. depot, foot of Canal street, to meet the incoming train from the East bearing Mr. Cassaway, Sr., and his daughter-in-law. As usual, the train was three hours and twenty minutes late. He greeted me cordially, as did the delicate woman who had grown hollow-eyed with grief and worry.

To the New Denechaud Hotel we drove, and, when the fatigued woman repaired to her room, the elder Cassaway took me to his own apartment and at once broached the subject harassing him for so many days and weeks. Had I seen anything of his son since my cablegram? And when I answered in the negative, he lapsed into silence, overcome with his bitter emotions.

“What kind of a woman is this ex-wife of Cyrus, Everett? Is she really a woman? Gad, she ap-



pears to me as a veritable fiend, sir, a heartless fiend possessed of all the black arts and knavery of hell."

"I do not know. Cyrus himself knew next to nothing of the woman prior to his marriage, and what he has since learned is hardly news of a prepossessing nature."

"I should say not. What was the minx's maiden name? Do you recall it?"

"Yes. She was a La Trube."

"Have you looked up her pedigree?"

"I saw no reason for doing so."

"Probably you are right. And yet, Everett, we might learn something that might be of real value to us in the future, who knows?"

"I doubt it. She divorced her husband, married your son, and there the matter ends, as far as I can see."

"I see farther than you do. You and I will go to Florida, ascertain the grounds upon which both secured their divorce, whether they lived together prior to the granting of the divorce, and whether they were legally married."

"A procedure I deem fruitless."

"And Cyrus, how fares he?"

"I have some startling intelligence to impart to you, relative to the Woman in Purple."

"Gad, but she's a trump! Suppose now that



she had been the wife of Wilburt, eh? and he had conducted himself as he did with Florence, what kind of an ending would there be to this episode?"

"She would either break him of his mad infatuation and the contaminating influence of her rival, or kill him in the attempt."

"And it would serve him right, the scalawag!"

"This strange woman is a Countess."

"What?"

"A real Countess."

"Oh, come now, Everett!"

"I saw her husband, Count Gustave Adelphi Englebert von Stratskyi of Hungary."

"Heavens, what a name! Then this bundle of fire is married?"

"Divorced, and madly in love with our friend Cyrus."

"Eh?"

"And the Count is beastly furious because a priceless legacy of his ex-Countess' managed to slip through his greedy fingers, together with her family jewels."

"Hang all Counts and Dukes, say I!"

"Amen!"

"And my son, where is he?"

"Quartered at the Gray Gables. He and the unsavory Count are great chums, fond of each other as two brothers."



"Just like him to associate with a money-grubbing no-Count."

"Does your daughter-in-law know of your son's marriage with the former Mrs. Scencio?"

"Yes. Unfortunately I was out when your cable came."

"I advise you to consult a good lawyer before you take any action," and I mentioned a noted law firm with offices in the Hennen Building, and he, deeming my advice logical, I gave him directions how to find the building in question, promised to return in the evening and left him, hastening to my quarters, for I had been absent over four hours, and I was anxious to see what progress my friend had made in his anticipated work.

Without the formality of knocking I entered the room that he had fitted up for his studio, then recoiled in horror at the sight which greeted my eyes. Naked as when she was born, a wreath of green fastened in her golden hair, eyes cast down in simulation of virtue, stood the model of my friend, who, seated about eight feet away, close to the wall, palette in one hand and brush in the other, was engaged in the first stage of reproducing the bewitching likeness of his living Venus.

"How dare you intrude?" he growled at me as I had entered unannounced.

"I'll leave, Cyrus," I heard myself murmur, as,



with covered eyes, I faced about, preparatory to a hasty exit, when the woman's voice stayed me.

"Mr. Everett!"

"Well?" and I faced about, devouring the sight before me through the crack of two fingers.

"I see you peeping, Everett."

I swore beneath my breath at this exposure of my duplicity, then dropped my hands and, with shame-lit face, feasted my eyes upon the dazzling nudity of this most beautiful woman.

"Do not talk whilst I paint."

"Why, Cyrus?"

"You disturb the action of my thoughts that control the stroke of my brush."

"How ridiculous!" laughing gayly, though never moving an iota from her peculiar posture. "I desire company, Cyrus, especially our friend Bangs, who is such a delightful conversationalist."

"I don't," flinging the brush on the palette and rising.

Instantly she had covered herself with a long, cream-colored mantle and had seated herself, making the room ring with the sound of her melodious laughter.

"Mr. Everett, do you know the latest disease of your friend?"

"No."

"He has caught a violent attack of jealousy."



"It is not so," blushing red to his very hair.

"Then why protest to the presence of our friend?"

"He annoys me."

"Is that all?"

"Is that not enough?"

"Oh, come, Cyrus, you are jealous that he should witness my sublime figure, gloat his eyes to their fill on the beauty that you are endeavoring to reproduce by the aid of your brush. Yet it is my desire that whenever I pose for you that he be present. Is this too hard for you to bear, you, who are to see nothing in this manifestation of woman's divine form, you who have schooled your passions whilst matriculating in the school of nature's sublimest art, the study of the human form divine?"

"I see not with sex's eye when I paint, madame," growing black under the eye as he toyed with the brushes on his palette.

"Why refuse the admission of your friend, then?"

"He need not refuse me, for I will vacate at once. In fact, I have no desire to come between him and his art, nor to be a witness to the revelation of your physical charms."

"How good of you, Mr. Everett. Yet if your friend is to go on with his work and I am to be his model, you, Mr. Bangs, are to remain with us during such time as I am posing."



"Why?"

"Cyrus Scencio, you know why."

"And yet I ask why?"

"Because you are an animal."

"A brute, Cyrus, do you not comprehend? Come, now, I have an appointment to keep, so resume your work. I will set myself here and see that you both behave yourselves," suiting the action to the words by placing a chair midway between the two near the wall, to the evident discomfiture of a man and the delight of this remarkable woman.

"I can stand this strain but an hour, Cyrus, and as I shall pose but one hour each day, you had better resume your work," which he did with a laugh, marveling, though, at her strange caprice.

Here was an opportunity of studying the man at a close range, during an ordeal that must have tried his nerves of steel until the sweat of passion stood upon his brow in large, damp beads. Yet he won the battle of this first day, the second and third, and many others, whilst I, of lesser strength and will power, had to resort to drugs to help me in this fearful crisis in my life. To have sat there day after day, and paint this unearthly beauty of a woman whose very soul was a seething cauldron of blind and implacable passion held in leash by a force that was beyond the solution of mere man, would have driven me insane. Yet, so schooled was



this man of art that, after the first day, he would enter the studio, cigarette between his lips, seat himself and paint, as though the image before him were a lifeless statue of wax or marble, to all intents and purposes dead to the very lustre in the woman's eyes that feasted upon the thought of her hidden soul.

"Cyrus, how can you dominate your feelings to such an extent that you can sit complacently before this fascinating model of yours and paint without cursing until the very atmosphere is charged with sulphur?" I asked him the first night after his model's debut.

"How? Easily, friend. In the first place true art has no knowledge of Sex."

"It must, for you are not stone."

"Choke your feelings, Et', catch them by the neck and wring them until they die. If you have a toothache you have the offending member pulled, do you not?"

"Yes. But you cannot extract Nature's inborn passion the same as a dentist does a huge molar."

"Yes."

"For heaven's sake tell me the secret, Cyrus, for I am about as near mad as a man can possibly be and not bite."



"Drive your thoughts to oblivion, trample them underfoot in the dust of defeat, and Pray."

"Do you pray?"

"Not now. But I used to. Yes, I prayed, my teeth I ground in rage, my hair I jerked in frenzy and my body cut and gashed with whips and knives until I'd fall exhausted."

"So, that's what you used to do back up in the bathroom for hours at a time!" I ejaculated in amazement at this man's strange confession.

"Come, the subject does not interest me, so let us change it. Are you going to keep your appointment with the elder Cassaway?"

"I am."

"If you do not object I will keep you company."

"By all means, come along," and to the New Denechaud we went, where, in the lobby, sat our woe-begone friend.

"Cyrus, friend, what has happened to you?" shaking his hands in a fatherly manner and inspecting his face with keen interest.

"Do I look changed?"

"I should say so."

"I was under the weather for some time, and am far from being my former self at this moment."

"You must be very careful of your health, Cyrus, and never drink anything but mineral water. Heavens, but these mosquitoes are fierce. I won-



der whether the people here have to fight these pests all the year through?"

"Yes, a diversion lasting from January to December."

"And sleep from year to year under those beastly, suffocating mosquito-nettings over one's bed?"

"Not unless you prefer the nightly music of the insects, Mr. Cassaway," and I laughed gleefully as I noted the several red lumps on his bald "pate."

"Nice place for a gentleman to live! What in the world did the people who founded this burg see in this swamp anyway? It would be the very last place on earth that I would select as a site for a town. Why didn't they go to Gulfport?"

"Yet the Gascons do not think so."

"To Hades with the Gascons and their ilk. Every other man you meet sports an unpronounceable name, and talks in a gibberish that would choke a goat. And the English that one hears in this burg is beautiful. 'Nice mans, youses, womans,' etc., etc. Heavens, the way the English language is murdered here is enough to make the Bard of Avon and Webster turn in their graves and groan a remonstrance."

"You saw the lawyers?"

"Yes, and one of them leaves to-night for Key West to investigate their divorces."



"There's the ex-husband of the Countess, Mr. Cassaway."

"Where?" asked Cyrus and the elder man in one voice.

"At the cigar-stand, refilling his case."

"My hands itch for an opportunity to ring his countly neck."

"Do so, Cyrus. Gad! But I should like to see you take him by the scruff of the neck and clean the floor with him."

The individual in question was coming toward where we sat, he spied me, halted abruptly and surveyed Cyrus with hostile eyes.

His bellicose nature only inflamed my friend to a greater thirst for battle, my own thoughts to flights of well-grounded fear, and Mr. Cassaway to a wild longing that his expectation might be realized.

"Mr. Cyrus Scencio, I believe?" stepping close to my friend, who turned his face toward me and pretended not to have heard the Count's address.

"The gentleman in the guise of a fifteenth century guardsman at King Rex's ball a few nights ago?"

Still being ignored by the addressed, he faced about and started toward the exit, changed his mind and returned for fresh battle.

"The gentleman who bestowed upon the lips of my Countess the Kiss of Fire?"



"You insolent cur, take that!" and his Highness slid most beautifully across the well-polished floor and only stopped his peregrination by coming in contact with the row of leather-upholstered chairs against the opposite wall.

"Mine honor has been insulted!" shouted he as he extricated his legs from the maze of chairs and regained his countly equilibrium.

"Ha! ha! ha!" and Mr. Cassaway roared with laughter at sight of the raging man from Hungary.

"You have insulted me, sir, and must apologize," shaking his fist in Cyrus' swarthy face.

"I'll wring your neck, you foreign cur, if you do not disappear in another moment."

"I hereby challenge you to a duel," deliberately slapping Cyrus' face.

"Duel with the like of you? Oh, no," and he caught hold of the Count's beautiful waxed mustachios and dragged him in front of us. "Get on your knees and apologize for your insolence."

The man's face changed to scarlet as he fought against the terrible pain produced by the unmerciful pulling of his hirsute appendages by Cyrus.

"Apologize!" and he nearly lifted the man from his feet in his savage strength and lust for battle.

Tears of acute pain were streaming down his cheeks as he hurriedly dropped on his knees and



between the escaping gasps of pain murmured an appropriate apology.

"Now rise!"

Painfully he rose to his feet, consumed with fear and helpless wrath.

"Let me hear but one word derogatory to the name of the woman who divorced you and I will break every bone in your miserable body. And if you value your countly dignity and skin, you will eschew me in the future, otherwise your Highness will suffer at my ungentle hands, hands that have not as yet learned to distinguish a nobleman from an ordinary scoundrel. *Au revoir.*"

"By heaven! Cyrus, you're great, great!" and again the lobby rang with the old gentleman's boisterous laughter, augmented by my own, roused by the lugubrious exit of my noble Count from Hungary.

"Seems funny to me, too," and Cyrus fell into a fit of hearty cachinnation that lasted for a full minute.

"And he's a real Count?" asked Mr. Cassaway after he caught his breath.

"The hotel register proclaims him as such, as does his ex-wife," I answered.

"And the like of him our American lassies marry, handing over their fortunes! Incredulous, boys, I cannot believe it."



“Why not?” asked Cyrus. “They exhibit a faultless exterior, are well-polished, groomed to the height of fashion, have a valet to curl their whiskers, tie their cravats, put on their shoes, etc., etc., the same as our New York pampered debutantes have a maid to frizzle their hair, lace their corsets, button their waists in the back, etc. They capture the girl and her money in one stroke, hie themselves off to continental Europe and laugh at us fellows who let such rich plunder slip through our fingers.”

“I’m going to have my Senator introduce a bill in Congress calling for a taxation of thirty per cent. on all dowries taken from this country to Europe through the medium of these international marriages,” and then and there the three of us became involved in a lively wrangle over the possibility of such a bill becoming a law, and thus whiled away the evening by the discussion of a topic that had feasted upon our individual minds for many days and weeks.



## CHAPTER XXI.

P. S.

WITH APOLOGIES TO THE HEIRESSES NAMED.

“During Russian famines the peasants sometimes sell their daughters to buy bread. Infinitely worse are the American parents who permit their daughters to sell their womanhood, their country, their language and their religion to worthless cads of foreign titles.”

Thus the Rev. Dr. Robert Stewart MacArthur hurled the above stinging denunciation, and more, too, at American “nobility-seekers” during an address before the recent Current Events Class of the Calvary Baptist Church in West Fifty-seventh Street, New York.

“American money has kept European aristocracy from sinking into oblivion,” he added, a palpable truth, the asseverations of royalty to the contrary notwithstanding.

“These abominable transactions in sale and pur-



chase (like the knocking down of a puddle at a public auction) bring the blush to the cheek of every worthy American. Recent events in England and France are a reproach to noble manhood and true womanhood on both sides of the sea.

“Certain of these titled foreigners deserve and receive the contempt of all true American men and women. How can these women so far forget a worthy and religious American ancestry as to forswear the religion of their fathers and the country of their own birth? Are their impecunious, often worthless, husbands a sufficient return for their renunciation of their faith? Are other miserable married lives soon to be reported from over the sea? Are separations and divorces again to occupy the attention of foreign courts and to fill the newspaper columns of America?

“Surely the time will come” (when the frazzled pundits of society have more brains than money, a possibility hibernating in the nest of oblivion) “when a true American woman will have no higher ambition than to be the wife of an intelligent, industrious and patriotic American and the mother of noble American sons and daughters. Many American women of wealth and culture to-day rejoice in this honor. They hold in slight esteem the woman who will renounce country and religion



for a worthless foreign title and perhaps a still more worthless foreign husband.

“Who is the next American woman who will virtually advertise her American millions for a foreign title? God help American parents to have a nobler ambition for their daughters. God help American daughters to have more respect for their womanhood!”

To quote a recent newspaper article relative to the wild spread of international marriages and the proposed dowry tax:

“The sentiment of the country, especially of the interior parts, where the simple life and high republican ideals are still in respect, appears at last to have been thoroughly aroused by the practice of bartering American girls and their fortunes for foreign titles.

“Public opinion has been deeply stirred by the marriage of Miss Gladys Vanderbilt, with her fortune of \$12,000,000, and Count Szechenyi, the Hungarian nobleman. This event, following immediately upon the revelations of the disastrous Vanderbilt-Marlborough and the Gould-Castellane marriages, has convinced a great many thoughtful and patriotic persons that the American nation is in the presence of a very real danger.

“This is no longer a subject for mirth, although some of the foreign noblemen concerned appear so



ridiculous in the eyes of mature Americans that it is impossible to suppress a jest when referring to them. The question has become a subject of legislation in the United States Congress and at least one State Legislature—that of New York.

“During the past generation foreign noblemen and other foreigners of rank who have married American girls have carried out of this country \$217,000,000 of good American money. If the proposed taxes of twenty-five per cent. of the United States Government, and 20 per cent. of the States had been imposed the nation would have saved \$97,650,000 from the total, or else many of the marriages would not have taken place, which would have been still better.

“Still another case has been forced upon the personal attention of the legislators at Washington. Miss Mathilde Townsend, a very beautiful girl who is credited with a fortune of \$10,000,000, is a resident of the capital and she has been pursued with peculiar avidity by fortune-hunting foreign noblemen. The Duke of Alba, who bears one of the proudest and most ancient titles in Spain, was her most ardent, yet business-like suitor. He possesses just the kind of a title that would fascinate a romantic young girl, but he made such remarkable demands that Miss Townsend’s trustees wisely declined to do business with him. The negotiations



were prolonged and acrimonious. Nevertheless legislators feel that Miss Townsend will be captured by some nobleman, unless they take steps to prevent it. They are anxious, if possible, to keep her and her fortune in Washington."

The above I doubt, and I hope with palpable grounds. If Miss Townsend, a personified Venus with copper-burnished tresses and figure like the Greek's rosy-fingered Aphrodite, possesses the American mind of her grandfather, Scott, then the Duke of Alba or any other foreign money-grubbing rake becomes a non-existent factor, and may as well hie themselves back to their worthless mortgage-eaten estates. To digress a little with the hope that this most beautiful, broad-minded and highly intellectual daughter of Liberty will bear me no ill-will. The Scotts, Tracys, Stronges and Townsends, all related by marriage, and all of Erie, Pennsylvania, are the unadulterated exponents of aristocracy in this country, if there really be such a thing, owing allegiance to the Stars and Stripes. For eleven years I lived in Erie, and know whereof I speak. This woman, far more beautiful than the famous Langtry or Gibson sisters, was then in knee-skirts and pigtails, and I in blouse and short breeches. As a girl she was most democratic, disdaining not to play with the girls and boys of her own age and of mediocre wealth, so strikingly dif-



ferent from the present pampered children of the very wealthy. High-minded and noble when in her teens, and come from a sturdy stock of pioneers, it is—at least I hope so—improbable that she will even consider in the remotest manner the possibility of a titled foreigner as her prospective lord and master. The greatest gift that the gods can shower upon a woman, Beauty, is hers; next, a sufficient amount of the world's goods to keep her in luxury and in ease during her life, together with every available opportunity of forming an alliance with a good, courageous son of Old Glory, why then should she turn her beautiful eyes toward a titled renegade from nowhere?

In the House of Representatives Congressman Adolph M. Sabath, of Chicago, introduced a bill imposing a tax of 25 per cent. on all dowries, gifts, settlements or advances of money or property, in consideration of marriages of citizens of the United States to foreigners. The bill has been presented so that there can be no evasion. The money is to be paid into the Treasury of the United States and the Secretary of the Treasury is directed to organize a suitable department to collect the tax.

The Hon. Mr. Sabath supported his measure with very cogent and moderate arguments. The American young man, beginning life and desiring to marry an American heiress, which he clearly



has as much right to do as a foreigner, is placed at an unfair disadvantage as compared with that foreigner. Assume that both the American and the foreigner are without capital. The American has nothing but his sterling moral worth, his industry and intelligence, whereas the foreigner possesses a title which no American can have, and which, as everybody knows, possesses a remarkable glamor for a young American girl.

One may ask whether the moral qualities of the American man are not a sufficient offset to the title of the foreigner. It must be remembered that a young girl of twenty or less is not likely to be able to appreciate a man's moral qualities in the highest degree, whereas she is extremely susceptible to the title of the foreigner, and probably to his superficial attractions, such as his waxed mustaches, his glib conversation, his graceful manners and his affected familiarity with music, art and literature. Thus it happens that a girl frequently succumbs to the fascinations of a worthless foreigner at twenty, whom she would not accept if she were thirty.

Clearly the American suffers from unfair foreign competition in the matter of courtship. Upon the principle of our protective tariff he is entitled to such treatment as will place him at a certain



advantage, instead of a disadvantage, as compared with the foreigner.

“How is this object to be attained? It is not wise to forbid such marriages, because that is an interference with freedom of personal action, which always provokes resistance. It would be equally unjust to exclude the noblemen from this country or to put a prohibitive tax upon them, for that would deprive them of the privilege of becoming democratic American citizens, if they feel disposed to lead a better life.

What better way can there be than to collect a large tax from the fortune of the girl who desires the superfluous and unwholesome luxury of marrying a foreign nobleman?

That will place the American suitor upon something like an equality. The girl will say: “This nobleman is very nice, but if I marry him I lose a quarter of my fortune.”

Then perhaps she will pause and consider the moral qualities and sterling worth of her American suitor. That will give him a reasonable opportunity to win her away from his foreign competitor.

In Congress Representative Charles McGavin, of Chicago, a brilliant orator, made some very interesting comments on his colleague, Mr. Sabath's bill. They were made on the same day of the Van-



derbilt-Szechenyi wedding, and were evidently called forth by it.

"Every day seems to be bargain day in the great city of New York," said the Hon. Mr. McGavin, "whether it be for a yard of ribbon or a pound of flesh; whether it be upon the retail counter of Broadway or the auction block of Fifth Avenue.

"I do not wish to allude to any particular girl or any particular foreigner. I have in mind only those who have monocles in their eyes, and idiotic looks upon their faces—those who have neither the disposition to do good nor the ability to do harm.

"It may not be amiss to inquire what the state and the Union is coming to in view of these international unions which are of such frequent occurrence of late between American heiresses and alleged nobility from abroad.

"A bill has been introduced in the House by one of my colleagues from Chicago to levy a tax upon all dowries and settlements made by these heiresses or their parents upon their titled husbands. My curiosity was aroused to know to what committee it might have to be referred, there being several committees with very appropriate names.

"The Committee on Foreign Relations might do, or the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce might also be appropriate; but on further thought and examination I found it had been very



properly referred to the 'Ways and Means Committee,' inasmuch as it sought to levy a tax; and, then I was more curious to know whether the present tariff schedule included dukes, earls, lords and counts, and finding that these things were not here mentioned I thought that it might be proper for the customs officer to classify them like frog's legs or poultry, for it is the general opinion among Americans that they are a species of geese.

"Mr. Chairman, we upon this side of the House have in recent years referred triumphantly to the fact that as between this and other nations the balance of trade was in our favor, but nowhere in the summary can be found a reference to such trade as this, where soiled and frayed nobility is exchanged for a few million American dollars wrung from the lambs of Wall Street, with a woman thrown in to boot.

"While I have engaged in some criticisms of these peculiar ones who have made a mockery of the most sacred relations of life—of these not satisfied with any other name but Countess Spaghetti and Macaroni, I want to say one word in tribute to those true American women who spurned the wiles of Earls, Lords and Counts for the love of his majesty an American citizen."

Mr. McGavin is a bachelor, but it is understood



that he has hopes of saving somebody from the wiles of an unprincipled foreigner.

The State of New York proposes to make it still more difficult to carry away the American heiress by imposing a State tax in addition to that imposed by the United States. In doing this the State would be following the precedent in the regulation of the liquor business. The United States imposes a large tax upon the production of alcoholic liquors, but this does not prevent the State from placing a very large additional tax on all places where liquor is sold.

In the New York Legislature Assemblyman Keller introduced a bill imposing a tax of 20 per cent. on all property above \$100,000 belonging to women marrying foreigners. Either personal or real property situated in the State of New York would be taxed. Every contract of dowry or marriage settlement would have to be recorded as if it were a deed. The imposition of this tax in New York would have especially important results, as the majority of great fortunes coveted by foreign noblemen, like those of the Vanderbilts and Astors, are situated in this State.

The additional 20 per cent. imposed in New York State would bring the total tax upon the fortune of a New York woman marrying a foreigner to 45 per cent., or nearly half the entire property. This



is almost prohibitive and would certainly deter many heiresses from marrying foreigners. Married life with a titled husband calls for a large fortune in order that the wife as well as the husband may enjoy the privileges of her rank, and to give up half her fortune would deprive the wife of fully half the joys of such a marriage.

Friends, relatives and legal advisers would urge upon her the unwisdom of contracting such a marriage, and in the vast majority of cases she would, Assemblyman Keller believes, prefer to remain an American.

Just why our free-born daughters of liberty sell themselves bag and baggage to foreigners seems beyond the understanding of the average American. A high-bred, democratic heiress is lured by the empty glamor of a titled idiot, marries him, and in a few years secures a divorce, settling an annuity of fifty or one hundred thousand dollars on the miserable wretch—a pampered sybarite who is too lazy to even button his shoes, a worn-out, nervous rake whose bride is compelled to pay for the flowers and engagement ring that he bestowed upon her, his goddess of hope, in the shape and form of good, hard-earned American dollars.

One of the most caustic articles written in the last decade denouncing these titled cads and senseless heiresses appeared in the New York Jour.



nal; and, as a great many aristocratic geese are still for sale in the matrimonial mart, I hereby affix the editorial and hope that the nibbling aspirants to the domains of Dukes and Counts will peruse it carefully and ponder over each line ere committing their gold and souls to the keeping of foreign profligates, the like of which our forefathers kicked out of this country in 1779.

“More than a hundred years ago American men were driving Englishmen and their king and their titles out of this country.

“We thought over here that we all wanted to be *equal*. We got up a constitution wiping out titles. We all decided to be known as Mr., Miss or Mrs. American Citizen. We even forbade by law any creation of titles or other encouragement of European flummery.

“What happens now? Many of our women with money rush around in the wake of a title more ardently than the old patriots followed in the wake of a fleeing redcoat.

“Some little, insignificant sample of foreign born humanity, a washed-out, squandered-out, morally, financially and physically bankrupt titled nobody comes to America, and our women, usually sane, go out of their minds.

“Mothers pursue these worthless titled specimens, daughters dream about them. We are



obliged to print their pictures and their names, and portraits of their waistcoats and pantaloons in this newspaper day by day, in order to follow up our rule and 'give the people what they want.'

"Isn't it possible for American women to realize that the title of Count or Prince means absolutely nothing in France, and still less in America?

"Can't our women understand that what they want to look for in a man are health, brains, the ability to look after, and especially the conscience that a woman can respect and upon which she can rely?

"One of our young women, idiotically described in the newspapers, including our own, as "Our Duchess," married a little English fool, Marlborough—a man just four degrees above an idiot, and physically looking like the tail-end fragment of sweatshop exploitation.

"We all know that the worship of titles, the servile following after rank, is very deeply ingrained in the human mind. For tens of centuries the lucky man or woman has been the one familiar with the powers that held title. To sit as near the throne as possible, and bask in the smiles of the one on the throne, have meant safety, wealth, and ease.

"Ever since the days of Solomon and his glory, and long before, title has meant power and impor-



tance, and title-hunting has been the work of the little human beings.

“You can’t take out of the human being in five minutes that which has slowly been put into him during fifty centuries. Well-meaning vegetarians know how hard it is to cure themselves of the meat habit that began thirty thousand years ago, when one of our ancestors captured an enemy and ate him.

“Our great American task is to develop in the American people real democracy. And women—who are really democratic at heart, since in their deepest consciousness they acknowledge only the superiority of good looks or good brains—ought to lead in the fight against snobbish reverence for titles.

“Mothers should teach their sons and their daughters that the difference between one man and another, one woman and another—the only difference that counts—is the difference in ability or in goodness.

“If you find a hundred American women desperately struggling for ‘social advancement,’ trying to know so-called fashionable people who don’t want to know them, you will find ninety-nine women discouraged, unhappy—and one more or less successful goose.

“The American woman, when disloyal to the



American idea of democracy and equality, represents a real danger, because she impresses the children and forms the character of the next generation.

"The man who is to be President of the United States fifty years hence is sitting about at this moment in his little short trousers, listening eagerly to every word that his mother says.

"That is the responsibility that rests upon women. They create the next generation first, bringing it into the world with suffering. And then, having created a living creature, they educate it, direct its thought, make upon its sensitive mind impressions during the first seven years that cannot be wiped out in seventy.

"Women, be sensible, sane, democratic human beings. If you want to respect any title, respect the title to human gratitude that men and women of real power have earned by real work.

"When you have about you young men and women full of possibilities, earnest, energetic, promising, how can you waste your time on the titled idiocies from other countries?

"Those that are free from this contagion should fight it. And ridicule is the best fighting weapon."



## CHAPTER XXII.

### SIGHT-SEEING.

During a trip of sight-seeing Cyrus, Mr. Cassaway and myself visited a building called the "Babildo," the original courthouse built by the Spaniards, turned over to the French, and finally to Uncle Sam, its age being over two hundred and fifty years.

And the Absinthe Hall, very old, and famed for its many drinking carousals, we inspected with keen interest and curiosity, as did we the old, tumbledown Louis Hotel, best remembered because it sheltered the last Bourbon King of France to visit this country.

Esplanade, St. Charles and Prytannia Streets are the de luxe ones of New Orleans; Royal, Decatur and those in immediate contiguity about the dirtiest ones that I have seen, where filth did to shame those of Constantinople which, for some erroneous reason, have enjoyed an international reputation for their squalor for many years. Yet



Mr. Cassaway, a man who had traveled most extensively, gave us to understand that in no city that he had visited had he seen the like of the streets above named.

That since famous house on Royal Street, where the United States Government officials had to tear away half of the second-story front so as to allow a full-grown cow to be swung to terra firma by means of block and tackle, was shown us. Probably if "Yellow Jack" had not paid a visit to the town the cow in question would be supplying its owners with milk, eating garbage in the small bedroom, which it never left from the day of its advent when a bleating calf until as above stated.

And these garlic-eating Gascons appear to thrive in filth. Philadelphia has a national reputation for its bedbugs and tin-roofs, Boston its beans, and Washington, D. C., its paradise for negroes and quaint names for streets, as: Goat Alley, Pig-Tree Court—where this street derives the double entendre in its appellation is a mystery—and Lincoln Court, after our beloved and first-martyred President, about the fiercest hole of blood-thirsty and lawless Ethiopians that I have seen in any Southern city; yet, none of these cities can compare with New Orleans and its eternal pest, the mosquito. Were



I to set in type some of the sights that I witnessed, the reader would throw this book in the fire, sick at heart and soul at the utter depravity of these un-American people. I cannot bring myself to exploit them in this volume, for it contains enough as it is to make the average man lose his courage.

The town is Catholic, the press leans toward Catholicity, the banks, corporations and business houses make no secret of their Catholic proclivities and tendencies, yet, with all this outward show of religion, it vies with Paterson, New Jersey, and Allentown, Pennsylvania, for unashamed lewdness.

In a Catholic Church that we visited, on Camp Street, near Girard, I think it bore the name of St. Joseph, the walls within were placarded with such delightful notices, to wit: Funeral services, \$10; requiem mass, \$25; baptism, \$5, etc., etc. I can even mention the name of a deceased and the name of the Shylock priest who absolutely refused to read or even allow the corpse to be entered in the cemetery because the poor, bereaved widow had not the required amount of toll, \$10. And, probably the buzzards would have carried the remains away had not the undertaker, a man who has done more for humanity than Carnegie or Rockefeller, paid the avaricious priest his clamoring money. What a sublime example of modern Christianity!



Every grocery store has a bar attached where beer on draught and whiskey is sold over the counter, for which privilege a tax of \$100 is levied by the city, whilst the regular saloons pay but \$200. Is there then any real wonder that the young men are drunkards, that the woman who styles herself "Southland Writer" can get paralyzed drunk every night in the week, despite her gray hairs and load of some sixty-odd years?

In broad daylight in front of the houses, seated in the threshold or hanging half-naked out of the windows, the soulless wrecks of creatures who sold their womanhood to the devil, bivouac for the appearance of a man, grab him by the collar and literally force him into their putrid den. Even as I write this I smile with content when I bethink myself of the broken teeth, half inlaid with gold, that Cyrus inflicted with his terrible fist as a hussy pounced upon him like a jackal upon a carcass. And this, readers, in broad daylight, on a beautiful wide street right off Canal, the main thoroughfare, a stone's throw from the beautiful Elk's Home!

Baltimore and Philadelphia have beautiful cemeteries, yet I make bold to say that there is in no other city in this country a burying ground that, for natural beauty and costly monuments, can compare with New Orleans' Metairie. It is a place not to mourn. Go there early in the day, before



the sun is high in the heavens and you will see a sight that will delight your soul, such as the Brunswick, Howard, Spofford and de Buys tombs.

And the rich beauty of Audubon Park is a climax of Nature's happiest mood. Giant water oaks, with spreading hands three and even four feet in diameter, stand like gods in this park, their brobdingnagian limbs strewn with a peculiar gray moss that grows to a length of seven and eight feet.

And Cyrus reveled in this undreamt delight of semi-tropical grandeur. With his pipe between his lips he lay on the grass and peered into the tangled branches of the oaks, through whose aperture a mellow rift of emerald sky could be seen.

"It seems like Paradise, Mr. Cassaway."

"So it does, boy. Ouch!" and he slapped his bald head with great force.

"What has happened?" from Cyrus as he rose to a sitting posture.

"A friendly mosquito kissed our friend," and I laughed heartily as he winked at me and wrinkled his face in mock fury.

"And spoiled the beautiful illusion of Paradise, Cyrus. I guess we're still in the environs of a dirty, garlic-eating Gascon burg."

"They call this Audubon Park."

"You might know that it would be burdened



with a name of some unspeakable lingo," rubbing his head reminiscently.

"It's magnificent though, Mr. Cassaway. If there are any trees in Paradise I should paint them just like these, majestic in their bearing and gigantic of stature. What a superb place for a poet!"

"And an artist?"

"Yes, Et', an artist. We must bring the Countess to this park, let her view the sublime beauty and dignity of these patriarchal water-oaks, the spangled threads of moss, and inhale the sweet perfume of the grass, so tender in its greenness and soft to the touch of man.

\*"Give me my palette, brush and canvas, and I will paint for you a sight for the gods. Cyclopean storms with rifts of white-capped mountain crested waves I'd reproduce in a thousand shades and tones; rolling swathes of fleeting clouds of bronze and gold that dip their prows into a diamond-studded sky from which the alabaster lamps of Paradise shine with eternal brilliancy, I'd paint for you, Mr. Cassaway, and for my love, a sea of ebony beyond the skyline's dome, where Thor raps thunder from his secret lee on high and chains of zigzag lightning race from pole to pole, and gyrotory windstorms whistling dirges to the tombs of medieval ages that bit the Dust of Oblivion when



Cyprus vied with Carthage for the high sea's trade, and Athens with Olympia for sculpture and the arts. O, I would paint Dame Nature in all her freaks and fancies, in all her sublime loveliness, and all her angry moods: when cyclones whistle from the bowels of old mother Earth and ravage with the pinioned lust of Belzebuth the face of dell and vale; when mournful winds descend from regions far and high, and chant a fitful hymn to those whose bones are bleached in charnel houses dank with putrid odors; or Venus in her crystal bath of onyx water beneath a copper moon in a bed of emerald, the tint of flesh like the hidden blush of rose, her hair like floating strands of twisted gold."\*

The pipe fell from his fingers, and in silence he stared from one to the other, his face glowing red as with the blush of shame.

"Gad, boy, but you're a poet! Go on, go on!" and he propped his back against the tree and closed his eyes as if he feasted on the rapturous adjectives from my friend and brother.

"Have you lost the trend of your poetical thought?"

"Yes. Off toward the west between the flight of Sol and the tangled ribboned light of gray and silver it has flown."

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\*With permission from "Betelguese."



"And you're a painter?"

"Only an apology at present, but I hope to be some day."

"Cyrus, boy, if I had a son with your temperament and gifts I would be willing to give to charity my nine millions of dollars that I have been several decades in accumulating and start all over again."

"Thanks for your compliment."

"Look here, boy, do you want any money to continue your studies in Europe? If so I will give you an endorsed check-book and send you off. All you will have to do is to fill in the amount, present it at a bank and, presto! the check is paid."

"Thanks, Mr. Cassaway. I appreciate your spontaneous offer."

"Spontaneous? Ye gods!"

"Your open-heartedness. However, if you will pardon me for saying so, your offer has come too late. I have carved out the path of my career, have a certain work to accomplish and, if after its consummation I should still be as far removed from my goal as at present, I will, should you so desire, accept your magnanimous offer and go to Europe for a year or two."

"What are you painting now?"

"Venus taking her bath."

"I want the commission of selling it."

"'Tis granted."



"And I sell it, too, if I have to buy it myself," he whispered in my ear, then chuckled mischievously, sensing pleasure in this all too prospective possibility.

"Is there no drinking water in this park?" asked Cyrus after a moment's silence.

"Are you thirsty, boy?"

"Yes."

"So am I. Suppose we go over to yonder house, or whatever it is, and see whether we can find some decent *aqua*. Are you coming along, Bangs?"

"No. I will await your return here under this beautiful tree," and with my back against its trunk, I closed my eyes and allowed my thoughts to roam at will as Cyrus and the elder Cassaway left to slack their thirst.

"Is this scenery not exquisite?" I heard a man's voice ask a few minutes later, and opening my eyes I looked about me, but saw no one.

"The hotel clerk informed me that I would be delighted, and I am. We must bring father to this park to-morrow, for he is very fond of natural scenery."

"Deuced strange!" I apostrophized as I rubbed my eyes again and looked, yet neither of the speakers could I see from whence I sat.

"Have you seen the Metairie Cemetery?"

"No. Why do you ask? Surely a burying



ground has no attractions for a sightseer?"

"Oh, yes, at least this one has," and as he launched into a hypotyposis of the renowned cemetery, I stole around the huge trunk of the oak to see who the man and woman could be, then receded, for the man was the Count Stratskyi and his companion the beautiful daughter-in-law of Mr. Cassaway.

I was shocked at this discovery, and racked my brains for a solution as to the *modus operandi* of the profligate Count in securing an introduction to this woman whom he had never met in Smart Society.

"Just look at that strange moss, Count, high up on the tree. Is it not most beautiful?"

"Yes, Miss Esty, it is superb."

"Esty!" I ejaculated beneath my breath. So she had herself introduced by her maiden name. I wonder why?

"And these trees are really oaks? They appear so, and yet their leaves are so entirely different to those that grow in the East."

"Here come friends of mine, Miss Esty; people that you will admire and delight to know," and in another moment, "How do you do, friends! Allow me to introduce you to Miss Esty. Mr. and Mrs. Cassaway, of New York and New Orleans, Miss Esty."



"Heavens!" I gasped as I stole a look at the newcomers from my vantage point, quivering with excitement.

"I have met the lady and gentleman before, Count," with a haughty toss of her head and scorn in her blue eyes.

These constituents of the confluent avenues of gayety colored but slightly as they surveyed the outraged wife before them, beaming with complacent smiles at the ignorant introducer, who found himself in a quandary from which he saw no immediate avenue of escape.

"How is it that you did not attend the races this noon, Count?" asked Mrs. Cassaway, after a momentary pause.

"I was introduced to this most charming woman here by a new acquaintance of mine; and, as she is an Easterner, and had not been to the city before, I wished to avail myself of the opportunity of showing her the sights."

"Have you seen the Metairie Cemetery, Miss Esty?"

"No," recomposing herself by studying the nearby oaks.

"Then, Count, you must not fail to show her this delightful place."

"Yes, Count; my wife is right. And as the day is young yet, I advise you to take your charge there



to-day. It is much grander in scenic beauty than this park."

"Shall we go, Miss Esty?"

"Not to-day, Count. I much prefer to remain here for a while and inspect the superb beauty of these god-like oaks. I do so wish that my artist friend, Mr. Cyrus Scencio, were here to enjoy with me this natural magnificence," glancing sharply at the two faces of the Count's new acquaintances.

"Cyrus Scencio?" from the Count.

"Yes. A great painter, sir."

"I have heard of him."

"You?"

"Yes. A day or so ago we met, and, unfortunately he made a very bad impression on me, and I think I did on him."

"Had you been introduced?"

"No."

"That accounts for it then, Count. I assure you that he is a most delightful companion when once you understand him. My father predicts a very bright future for him in his chosen profession. Though, just why his wife should have left him, and eloped with another woman's husband is beyond me, seeing that he was a most faithful husband and with such brilliant prospects."

Black thoughts of murder stormed the soul of her ex-husband as he thus was forced to listen to



the recital of his cowardly act by his one-time wife.

"Was the woman who eloped a member of your best society?"

"No. She came of a mediocre family from the South. I think it was this very city."

"New Orleans?"

"Yes."

"And the husband was faithful?"

"And devoted as a man can be."

"And the man, what did he do to reconcile himself to his sorrow?"

"Nearly killed the man and woman."

"It would have served them right."

"Do you think so, Count?"

"I do, friend Cassaway. The woman must have been a wild and soulless jade, judging from what I hear."

"You here, Mrs. Cassaway? How delightful!" and the Countess embraced the ex-wife of young Cassaway most affectionately, then surveyed the others in haughty silence and mien.

The ramifications in sight were laughable, and delighted me to the point where spontaneous laughter had to be checked with a bunch of grass so as not to divulge my immediate presence.

"Miss Silence, allow me to introduce you to the Count Gustave Adelphi Englebert von Stratskyi, of Hungary."



"A Count?"

"Yes, dear."

"They are not *persona grata* with me, friend, though no insult is meant to the gentleman you would introduce."

"Your name," scratching his head in doubt, "is Cassaway, is it not?" pointing to Wilburt.

"No, sir."

"What?"

"My name is Sassasay, Count."

Again I made use of a gag to stifle the mad desire to laugh outright on account of the ludicrous perplexity of the nobleman, and the ramifications brought about so unexpectedly.

"Pardon me, but I thought your name was Esty?"

"So it is, Count."

"And yet this lady greeted you as Mrs. Cassaway!"

"Which was my married name, Count. I am now a widow, if you please, and have a perfect right to use my maiden name, have I not?"

"Yes. But why not introduce your charming friend to the Sassasays?"

"Thunder and blazes!" and Mr. Cassaway, Sr., halted abruptly before the tree, and surveyed the men and women before him in consternation, whilst



I emerged from my place of concealment and whispered the news into Cyrus' ears.

"Mr. Cassaway, my friend Miss Silence, the Count Stratskyi of Hungary, and the Sassasays of New Orleans," and when the dumbfounded man of finance had accepted the introduction, "Mr. Everett Bangs and Mr. Cyrus Scencio, allow me to introduce you to my friends," whereupon the two of us were compelled to acknowledge the introduction without creating a scene, a monumental task for my friend Cyrus, whose brows were knitted in an ugly wrinkle as he forced himself to the disagreeable task.

"I started this morning on a sight-seeing expedition, and it appears that I have more than succeeded."

"How so, Mr. Cassaway?"

"Because, little girl," stroking his daughter-in-law's hair, "I have been an eye-witness to the making of a cat's-paw out of a real foreign nobleman."

The bomb had exploded, as I knew that it must sooner or later, and in something like trepidation I awaited the result of this sudden explosive.

"Your reference is most insolent, sir," and the Count strode up to the elder man in a hostile mood.

"You appear unduly excited and vexed, Count."



"What meant you by your insulting remarks, sir?"

"Who is this lady, Count?" pointing at the former wife of his son.

"Miss Esty."

"I beg your pardon. The lady is Mrs. Cassaway."

"And now is a widow."

"And there stands her recalcitrant husband."

"What?" receding in pure astonishment.

"And this is Cyrus Scencio, the man who gave you a lesson in polite manners not so many hours ago, and who is the ex-husband of that woman there."

"The one that you said was a hussy, Count," I interposed so as to make things more interesting to all concerned.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, madame," hastening up to her and possessing one of her hands with the intention of kissing it.

"Your insults are unpardonable," slapping him in the face with the hand he fain would have kissed.

Baffled by this perplexing denouement he stood there, red in the face and speechless with amazement.

"Mrs. Cassaway, allow me to introduce you to my ex-husband, the Count Gustave Adelphe Engle-



bert von Stratskyi of Hungary," and the Countess presented the startled Mrs. Cassaway number one to the dumbfounded roue, to the supreme delectation of my friends and self, and to the evident discomfiture of the introduced.

"You! You! the ex-husband of my friend, Miss Silence? Impossible!"

"And you the ex-husband of this charming woman? Impossible!" and he shook his head in doubt as he surveyed the passion-lit face of the younger Cassaway and the whitened one of the latter's one-time wife.

"I am the ex-countess Stratskyi, Florence, having secured a divorce from that creature a few years ago. Of his royal attainments and proclivities I will relate to you at a more propitious hour. At present let this suffice as a warning. The man is not the kind of an associate that I should like to see you in company with."

"Who introduced you to him, Florence?"

"Mr. Knox, the gentleman whom you introduced me to a few days ago."

"See to it, dear, that you shun him in the future as one does the bubonic plague. Come now, time is getting short and we must be getting back to town," and with her arm linked in his he faced about and proceeded toward the grounds' exit, whilst Cyrus and the Countess departed hand in



hand, leaving me the sole witness to this closing drama.

"Mrs. Cassaway, I do not know how to sue for pardon."

"You need not."

"But I have insulted you most grossly, and that unintentionally."

"Did you not mean what you said?"

"Come, Janice, overlook the trap in which our friend found himself."

"I will not. He called me a jade and hussy. And you, my husband, stand here and sue for this creature's pardon!"

"Madame, I entreat you——"

"I want nothing more to do with you, sir."

"But I am innocent, madame. How could I have known this complex relationship existing between you and the other people?"

"Even so, you had no right to call the woman a hussy."

"For which transgression I sue for forgiveness."

"And which is denied you. I understand your motive though, Count, a despicable one at that. You thought that by denouncing the former wife of the artist friend of your new acquaintance that you would be ingratiating yourself into her good graces, that she possesses money (she only has nine



millions, Count) and that you might see your way clear in making her your second Countess."

"This will do, Janice."

"How dare you command me, sir!"

"I am not exercising an unusual authority, dear. Through an unavoidable mistake the Count compromised himself, ignorant of the true identity of the wife of Cyrus. Was he not given to understand that the woman was of mediocre birth?"

"I am as good as she is!"

"Better, darling!"

"And my pedigree dates back to the early kings of France. And yet you allowed me to be grossly insulted! This has been an object lesson to me, Wilburt, one that I will not forget in a lifetime. If you wish to remain here and palaver with this foreign rake, do so. I am going home."

"Madame, you insult me."

"It is doubtful, sir, for your finer sensibilities have been deadened by your mode of living. Are you coming, Wilburt?" starting to leave the grounds.

"I'll see you at the Denechaud, Count," then hastened after his irate spouse and disappeared from view.

As the Count had not seen me during the squabble with the wife of Wilburt, I now hastened behind the huge oak and watched the man as he un-



bosomed his sorrow to the sky.

“Nine millions!” he echoed. “A king’s ransom! And beautiful as an houri! Satan chase my dastard soul, though!” and he swore lustily as he clenched his fists, “the woman is a divorcee. Cassaway is her ex-husband, his present wife is the ex-wife of that infernal artist, the bald-headed man is the father of young Cassaway, the artist the former husband of the present Mrs. Cassaway the second ; Mrs. Esty, the lady with the millions, Mrs. Cassaway number one; the ex-countess the intimate friend of hers, and probably the inamorata of this artist with the Italian name! Heavens! will I ever get this tangle straight? And I called the wife of my friend a hussy and a jade! Oh, Lord!” and he made toward a distant automobile, gesticulating to himself as he went, whilst I returned to town in the plebeian street car laughing to myself at the perplexing quandary of my Count from Hungary.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### CITY PARK.

In juxtaposition to the now extinct Louisiana Lottery, City Park compares most favorably if one weigh the ethical part of its aftermath.

Five thousand Mrs. Vans (I call them so because a Mrs. Van whom I met at the track had lost three husbands, her children, four rooming-houses and even resorted to the desperate expedient of setting fire to her house so as to collect the fire insurance and play the races) visit this gambling hell every day, whilst a lesser number pay their diurnal respects to the outlaw track across the river. And the habitues of the race tracks in New Orleans are an entire different class of people than those that support Bennings, Aqueduct and Sheepshead. The latter are patronized by people of means, the former by mistresses of rooming houses, boarding houses, etc. It is nothing for a madam to go to City Park with her entire month's rental (\$900



in one case), place it on a "sure" thing, and walk home, having not the requisite amount of car fare to take her back to the city.

Husbands, wives and children are kept in rags and starvation by this insane gambling craze of either one of the parents. Here book agents, industrial life insurance panhandlers, conductors, motormen, restaurant waiters, clerks, etc., etc., from each and every walk of life whose wages are meagre and hours long, play the races on a "tip," and lose, thereby helping to swell the coffers of the soulless bookies, seven-eighths of whom are Jews. And these unsophisticated men and women really believe that they can beat the devil at his own game. If they take the same "long-shots" in escaping the mouth of hell and catching the through express for heaven, then I pity their destiny. Ministers, too, who ought to cry out against this spreading evil, are daily frequenters of this demoralizing den. When a minister of God takes up the cudgels in defence of race tracks and their concomitants, then it is about time that we say, "Now I lay me down to sleep," close our weary eyes and give our fighting soul and energies into the keeping of the merciful hereafter.

Says the Rev. D. J. McCarthy, rector of St. Mark's Church, Sheepshead Bay, in his letter to Governor Hughes: "I am happy and proud to be



able to say that they (the race track thieves and gamblers) are not what they are painted by some of their maligners, but are, on the other hand, honest, conscientious and honorable. I know hundreds of our racing men who assist faithfully at Divine service every Sunday, and are really a credit to their church."

I should like to make the acquaintance of this priest and see what manner of man he be who thus raises his voice in behalf of this crying scourge. "They are honest, conscientious and honorable!" So is Satan and his brood of vampires. "They attend Divine service every Sunday!" Why not? Belonging to the same category as King Nick, who never fails to show his face at Divine service, they, too, show their fidelity to him by attending the sacerdotal service; both are a "credit" to the church, for their business is of like nature, manufacturing moral lepers out of once virtuous men and women.

If this priest's church is kept from starvation by the blood shekels of race-track owners, gamblers and bookies, then it is doomed, and presents itself as a temple of hypocrisy, catering to abominable Pharisees.

The ethics of this man remind me of the peasant who had a grudge against a baker, went to the village confessor, said his "confitiator" and in-



formed the good priest that he had committed murder. Receiving absolution he left, hunted up his baker enemy and stabbed him through the heart with a villainous-looking butcher knife. As he was in the act of cleaning his foul hands of his victim's blood, the good priest entered the shop for his customary loaf of dry rye bread; and, seeing the murderous scene before him, denounced the culprit and announced that he was off to the village gendarmie, whereupon the murderer informed him that he was bound by the oath of his church and the sacredness of the confessional not to divulge his rapacious deed because he, the murderer, had confessed to him his bloody deed prior to its exemplification; and so with this Sheepshead priest. He absolves the respectable and honorable gamblers, receives their tainted gratuity and, in open print, espouses and defends a baneful institution which the press and clergy throughout the country are striving to abrogate.

"You might ask," continues he, "what is the attitude of the natives of Sheepshead Bay toward racing? There is only one answer. By far the vast majority are in favor of it, for it is their very bread and butter. Here there are no industries or manufactories of any kind. Hundreds are employed in some capacity or other on the race-track, while hundreds of others derive their maintenance



from the feeding and lodging of the racing element. Close the race-track, they say, and we will be forced to close our houses, and property will depreciate in value."

A logical deduction for one whose bread is buttered by the lucre gleaned from faithful worshippers of both race-track and St. Mark's Church.

Probably the Rev. D. J. McCarthy is prepared to rise to the defence of his western colleague, the Rev. Charles S. Brown, pastor of the Christian Church of Lees Summit, Mo., who lost \$300 of his parishioners' money in an all-night poker game at Kansas City; and it is also probable that the Western divine would espouse his Eastern brother's intercession for a continuation of the gambling at Sheepshead Bay. Why not?

The Louisiana Lottery employed more people than Sheepshead, Brighton Beach, Aqueduct and several other gambling hells combined, but was convicted as a simon pure gambling institution and driven from this country, fleeing to Honduras, where it died on its feet last year in a vain endeavor to resurrect its fallen power. If Sheepshead Bay will be wiped from the face of the map by the elimination of this cankering eyesore, and St. Mark's Church close its doors on account of lack of funds, then let those citizens of real virtue and probity repair to some other city where manufacturing en-



terprises are to be found, where the woof and warp of Life's countless miseries is not the fundamental evils bred by the fanatic craze of Chance, and the lop-eared, nasal-twanged, soulless sons of Israel who predominate as bookmakers at the race-tracks, veritable Shylocks, defended by a priest and judges as they suck the vitals of a blithering lamb, rob him of his honor, name and manhood, and turn his face toward a criminal career, a whiskey-emporium and the gallows.

If craps and dice are amenable to the law, why not the races? Is the hazard not contingent on King Chance? Are the odds posted by the purveyors of this modern hell not dependent upon luck? Where no guarantee is given by the seller, where no tangible asset is exchanged for a dollar save, as is here the case, one-thousandth fraction of fickle possibility, the law should take cognizance of it and make it amenable to its statutes by prohibiting the practice with the application of both a fine and imprisonment for each infringement. Yet, paradoxical as it must appear to the average layman, Justice takes no notice of the horse-races, though it pounces upon the lesser evils of shooting dice and the game of poker.

To all intents and purposes the administrators of justice in this country are suffering from an attack of moral blindness. Probably the gout has a



strangle-hold on our poor overworked judges, thus prohibiting them the full use of their mental functions as they croon over a bundled foot, else (soft, for I am whispering this terrible secret of mine) the jingling music of the race-track owners' filthy lucre lures them to the couch of soft, inanimate inaction; perchance like one William Travers Jerome, whose gilded cigarettes obscure the vision of corporate graft and all its allied concomitants in America's greatest cosmopolitan city, against whom twenty-two specific charges were embodied in a petition recently filed with the Governor, asking for his removal from the office of District Attorney, said petition stating that "by reason of his neglect of duty the days of his usefulness have passed."

In passing it may not be amiss to state that the present incumbent of the District Attorney's office is what the New York World so ably called "A Tragedy of American Politics." Again: "No man of his generation ever had more brilliant opportunities. No man of his training and talents ever rendered a sorrier account of his stewardship.

"Had Mr. Jerome kept faith with the people, had he redeemed his pledges, had he fulfilled his promises, had he followed the trail of the great insurance and traction criminals, had he been the fearless, single-minded prosecutor of lawbreakers that



he pretended to be, no office within the gift of the people of the United States would have lain beyond the possibility of his attainment. To-day, with the record of the last two years against him, there is no office to which he could be nominated and none to which he could be elected.

“But Mr. Jerome’s wasted political opportunities are a minor part of the tragedy. By the manner in which he has conducted his office he has given stability to the socialist charge that there is one kind of justice for the poor and another kind for the rich.” (Is there not?) “By his failure to keep his word he has discredited political independence and made it the more difficult for honest citizenship to fight against the Murphys and the McCarrens. He has set back the clock of political reform in New York, and for years to come every man of character, conscience and conviction who seeks to battle against political corruption must meet the sneer that *He’s another Jerome.*”

Against my will I went with Cyrus to the track. It was the day on which the \$10,000 purse was to be run for, and the excitement of the entire concourse of habitues was strung to its highest tension.

From some tout my friend secured a “sure thing,” a twenty-to-one shot, I think it is called in racing parlance, borrowed twenty dollars from me, and with the fifteen of his own staked it on the



hazard. And as sometimes comes to pass when a beginner starts to woo blind Fate, he won \$800, of which the informer received \$100 as a gracious gift from my friend, whereupon he promised to return again with another "lead" secured from headquarters direct, wherever that may be, ere the races should be over.

Leaving my friend, I mingled with the throngs, studying the different features of the excited bettors and their fleecers; and, when violently thrust to one side by a hurrying individual, and facing about to take him to task for his abrupt rudeness, I became conscious of the man's identity as that of Wilburt Cassaway, Jr.

In his hand he held a great wad of yellow-backed bills, and as the bookie asked the amount of the wager he shouted, "Five thousand on Rosebeam!"

Such recklessness took my breath away, though the booky seemed not at all excited, merely handed the man a piece of paper, then busied himself with the other clamoring men who were surging around him like bees around a sugar-cone.

Again the ringing cry of "They're off!" permeated the air, wild shouts of rage and yelps of glee split the atmosphere in twain when the race was run, and, with a fearful oath, Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., threw his piece of paper on the ground and



made his way some distance up the grand stand, where I discerned the second Mrs. Cassaway.

Perceiving the previous informer wildly gesticulating with my friend, I hurried to where the pair stood, and soon became aware of the case in point. He had received the "real" thing from the jockey who was his friend—every jockey appears to be the friend of every tout you meet—the odds were 10 to 1 and a winner, the wrangling being caused by Cyrus objecting to the formation of a pool with his informer and so scoop an enormous profit.

I had but \$90 in my pockets, besides the \$20 that Cyrus had returned, having cashed a check for the first named amount whilst we were waiting for a car on Canal and Camp streets; so, after much persuasion, I handed Cyrus \$100, and with his \$680 and the tout's \$220, the entire \$1,000 was placed on the die of chance.

I saw the gambler's light in his eyes as he craned his neck and watched the fleeting number on the horse that was to win him his fortune. With beating pulses and throbbing heart he glued his eyes upon the three leading horses as they started for the homestretch.

Again the wild shouts of jubilation and the smothered curses, the cashing of bets and muttered expletives from my friend, who mourned the loss of



his money and threatened to drub the equally raging tout.

"There's the Count!" I whispered to Cyrus as I discerned said individual worm his way toward the younger Cassaway.

"He's no relative of mine!" came the caustic rejoinder as he faced about and made his way to the clamoring crowd of excited bettors.

"Three to one on Star-Girl! Three to one on Star-Girl!" shouted a red-headed, perspiring Jew, the rotundity of whose stomach rolled like a barrel at sea as he strained his nasal voice in proclaiming his wares, swaying from side to side in a frenzy of excitement and avariciousness.

The incessant roar of bookies and the babble of bettors was deafening. Surely there cannot be such a thing as scarcity of money in this country, otherwise the sea of legal tender that I saw must have been spurious. Hatfuls, handfuls and satchelfuls saw I wagered in the space of three minutes with this one son of Israel.

A few paces away, spastic ejaculations from my Count from Hungary and Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., attracted my attention; and, wondering what the issue could be, I wormed my way within hearing distance, which means in this case that I had to come within striking distance, and then only caught half of their wild conversation.



"The stake is \$10,000!" I heard Wilburt shout to the Count.

"How much have you there?"

"Forty thousand dollars, Count."

I gasped in consternation at this amount. Could the man really be insane enough to wager this enormous amount at one throw of blind Fate!

"And Cauliff will put in \$10,000?"

"Yes, Count. And don't forget that this is a sure thing. The owner gave me the inside information, also \$5,000 to place in the pool. The jockey and stableman have each \$1,000 down. And if you will come in on this—the odds are five to one—you'll make a good sized fortune. You won \$9,000 just a few minutes ago on the result of the last race, so you will be called upon to place but two-thirds of the needed amount from your bank account."

"Here," drawing a huge wallat from his inside coat pocket, "take this \$30,000, and let us hope that Fate is not against us."

I was stunned. Eighty-seven thousand dollars to be wagered on the pendulum of Chance! Four hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars to be won in less than ten minutes if a poor beast should outrun its other racing brothers and sisters!

"Here's the check!" holding up a piece of paper to the Count.



"I am somewhat anxious, Mr. Cassaway."

"Then what am I? All my wife's money is at stake. I myself have lost over \$250,000 at this infernal track since the first of the year, and I'm about as near broke as a man can be and not starve. But we'll win, Count, we can't lose. Have we not \$5,000 from the owner as a guarantee of his good faith?"

"I am optimistic, friend, and love to tempt dame Fate. I have lost in one hour at Monte Carlo more money than you have at this track since your coming South. What good is money if you do not circulate it?"

The betting books were closed, the eyes of thousands were fixed upon the starter, the cry of "They're off!" sounded its music again and the race for the track's greatest stake was on in full.

"Watch Mountain-Boy!" cried Wilburt to the staring Count. "His number is twelve. See how he's forging ahead!"

I looked and noted that the two horses in the lead were Star-Girl and Cassaway's "sure" thing. Would the horse win? Would my lifelong enemy leave the track with the almost fabulous sum of \$435,000, the result of one winning?

On came the horses, neck and neck, fighting with superb strength for a head, a neck, or more, their masters in the person of a jockey perched high on



their mount's withers, coaxing, entreating and scolding as the goal came nearer and nearer.

"Star-Girl! Star-Girl! Star-Girl!" shouted a thousand voices in one breath.

"Mountain-Boy! Mountain-Boy! Mountain-Boy!" shrieked groups of men in a frenzy of excitement, their hats in the air, like a group of negroes getting religion at a Methodist revival meeting.

"Star-Girl will win!"

"Mountain-Boy will win!"

"Cyclone's forging ahead!"

He was picked to win by those who understood the secrets of horse racing.

"Cyclone! Cyclone! Cyclone!" from his frantic constituents.

"Come on Mountain-Boy!"

"Come on Star-Girl!"

The babble was ear-splitting. Five thousand mouths at one time calling to their favorites ravaged the air like the mighty roar of an artillery duel.

"I played first place for our horse, Count, and we'll win!"

And so it appeared to me as I fixed my eyes upon the three lithe racing machines in horseflesh as they were but a hundred yards from the judges' stand. Mountain-Boy having the inside rail, Star-



Girl next, and a full neck behind, and the favorite Cyclone the outside, nip and tuck with Cassaway's choice.

"Mountain-Boy wins!" went up the voices of a thousand men in a deafening roar.

"Count, Count, our pool's won \$435,000!"

"Cyclone wins!"

"Sacramento!" and the Count brushed me to one side as he leaped into the air and glared at the judges' stand, where the announcement of the winner is shown on a blackboard in white letters.

"Cyclone wins! Cash your checks!" from the bookies.

And then pandemonium broke loose. The \$10,000 purse had been won by a new horse and made history in the annals of turfdom. The Count had lost \$30,000, less the \$9,000 previously won, and young Cassaway the huge sum of \$40,000, to which his wife contributed her entire bank account.

And the cries of rage and despair, punctured with vile oaths, sickened my heart and soul at the utter depravity of some men and women.

Eighteen hundred dollars had been lost by a young widow, the money which should have settled a mortgage on her home that housed her fatherless children, at least so I learned from her semi-hysterical conversation with another beautiful woman but a few feet from where I stood.



"Look here, Cauliff, I want to sell my automobile for \$5,000. I paid \$8,000 for it but eight weeks ago."

"You will do nothing of the kind, sir. The machine in question is my personal property."

The man Cauliff looked what he was. A professional race-track gambler, sporting a huge diamond in his shirt-bosom, three on his fingers, a heavy fob inlaid with diamonds and forming a horse-shoe and whip, and wearing an extraordinary loud vest of bright red.

"I am going to sell the automobile just the same," savagely from Wilburt, as the trio stopped but a few feet from where I stood.

"Are you broke, Cassaway?"

"Nearer than I ever expected to be. I disposed of my 100,000 acres of timber land in the Carolinas several weeks ago and dropped it with those infernal bookies. I'm broke, Cauliff, and must sell the automobile. You know, Janice, that I paid for it with my own money."

"I do not care. It was a birthday gift to me, and I do not want to part with it."

"However, I'm going to dispose of it. Will you buy it, Cauliff, at the figure mentioned?"

"Yes, provided your wife will consent."

"Janice!"

"I will not."



"I'll sell it anyway. If Cauliff doesn't buy it then somebody else will. Sold it must be, and that before night."

"I'll take it. Where's the machine?"

"Over there."

"Here's the money," counting out five one thousand dollar notes. "Give me a receipt for it, Cas."

The receipt was written out, he handed it to the gambler, stuck the \$5,000 in his wallet and proceeded to direct the purchaser to his new acquisition.

That Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., should have lost his entire fortune in the space of two months surprised me not, after what I had witnessed at City Park to-day. Croesus himself would have been a pauper in ninety days at such furious gambling. Just as he had carried his appetite of concupiscence to excess, so had he this sudden craze of insane recklessness at the race-track, always dragging the woman down with him, deaf to the voice of Conscience and blind to the irrescindable issue gleaned by race-track gamblers, touts and hangers-on.

I felt depressed on account of this knowledge of the man's present financial loss. Just what would be the outcome of his desperate escapade I did not know. Yet I could have prevised almost to a certainty, knowing his peculiar idiosyncracies and extravagant propensities of the woman who was his wife.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE PLOT THICKENS.

The races at City Park were over, the season closed, the hordes of strangers had gone their way, save about three hundred Easterners, who were stranded in the city on account of their patriotism to the race-track, and were destined to become a public charge of the city fathers and the haunts of charity.

Individualism and characteristics became more noticeable in the permanent citizens, hotel and rooming rates returned by degrees to the normal standard, and business on Canal street dying off at a most prodigious rate. I honestly believe that if the Legislature should abolish the races that the town would go bankrupt in less than twelve months, that the six millions of dollars of Eastern capital invested in the New Denechaud, New Gruenwald, Audubon (Building), and two other new hotels in course of erection would have to go into the hands of a receiver and close their doors, for they



would not do enough business to pay the interest on the interest, much less the principal. It is not so many years ago that the St. Charles Hotel, then the finest in the city, used to discharge all its help and close up shop for six months immediately following the closing of the racing season. Even is this so of the Whitney Foundry and other enterprises. Skilled mechanics brought to town from the East and West are treated like dogs by the "native sons," who strenuously object to the advent of a foreigner in the factories, foundries, etc. In the Whitney Foundry, for instance, an internal war has been going on for nearly two years because not enough "native sons" were proficient to fill the vacant benches. Tools are stolen from the foreign "interlopers" brought from Chicago, New York and Pittsburg, assaults upon them are of frequent occurrence, as are threats of violence against the owners and proprietors.

There is a city ordinance calling for seats for the women clerks in the department stores; yet, with but one exception, and that Kauffman's, this law is ignored.

And the heat from May to October is intense. Cyrus and I were on our way to inspect the Jewish emporium house, Maison-Blanc, and a gentile establishment called D. H. Holmes & Company, for the purpose of seeing whether seats were provided



for the salesladies, and were nearly overcome with the glaring heat.

"Look here, Et'," halting me in front of the Henry Clay statue in a square bounded by Camp and St. Charles, Girard and Poydras. "I can't stand this terrible heat any longer, and I may as well be a man and confess the truth: I am not interested in the problem of forcing these Jew houses to furnish seats to their lady clerks. I've enough troubles of my own without shouldering other people's. It is hot enough on the street without going into those stuffy ovens where the heat reminds one of Old Nick's quarters," and he sprawled himself on the grass under a tree, lighted his pipe and began to enjoy himself as best he could, whilst I continued to my destination in the broiling sun, saw what I anticipated, and hurried back to the shady nook of my friend.

"Did you enjoy yourself, Et'?" laughing at me through puffs of pungent tobacco smoke.

"Immensely," lied I, as I drew a weed from my case and lighted it.

"Did the managers crack a bottle of champagne with you?"

"No. I saw your friend the Count from Hungary in Holmes' buying several yards of a very fine silk for a lady's dress."

"Umph!"



"I wonder who it is for?"

"I feel like painting this morning, so let us return. I expect to finish it in another month or so," whereupon we rose and hastened home, Cyrus to paint and I to read aloud to the charming Countess.

Though the heat in the day is fearful, the nights are cool and would be most delightful were it not for the hordes of abominable mosquitoes.

From my past experience I am constrained to admit that New Orleans has without preamble or peradventure the best street car system in the world, and puts to shame in more ways than one the antiquated horse cars in New York, and the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Co.'s graft of charging three cents for every needed transfer.

As in ancient times all roads led to Rome, so here, by a strange coincidence or design, all cars converge with Canal. The system is perfect, and is run with the precision of clock-work. If you wish to go to Audubon Park, take a car on Canal. If you wish to go to City Park, West End, Metairie Cemetery, or any other point of interest, Canal street is the place where you wait for your car.

The concerts at West End were very good, the park itself is very beautiful, and would be more patronized by the better element were it not that it is the rendezvous for the garlic-eating Gascons.



Trips to Lake Pontchartrain, Tangipahoa River, Hains Falls and side trips to such historic places as Joe Jefferson's home, the Allen Plantation at Lafourch Parish, the Arcadian structure of Eugene Vumez of St. John's Parish, the Belle Alliance Plantation of Ascension Parish, "Madewood," late home of Col. W. W. Pugh, the ruins of the home of "Fighting Governor" Allen, and St. Mary Parish delighted us immensely; and the moonlight excursions on the Mississippi were a constant joy to the Countess.

And I had but just decided that the remainder of our stay would be an uninterrupted continuation of the present, when an incident occurred that threw a new shadow over our respective horizons. Of course it was a woman. Did you ever hear of any trouble, tragedy or even comedy that lacked a member of the gentler sex?

It was at West End, where a handsome, dark-skinned woman became acquainted with Cyrus through the medium of an accident. Informal introductions and acquaintances are the order of things in New Orleans. He was seated with myself at a small round table immediately in back of a woman dressed in the height of fashion, drinking claret wine. The band was playing that delightful march, "The Jolly Copper Smith," now murdered by every phonograph in existence; and I was just



in the act of lifting my glass of ale to my lips when a bungling negro waiter, emulating the tactics of a Japanese juggler with his tray of viands, bumped against Cyrus as the latter had his glass raised to his lips, and spilled the entire contents of the tray upon my friend, who, in the excitement of the incident, hastily sat his glass on the table and leaped to his feet with the evident intention of thrashing the negro. However, fate frustrated his design. In leaping to his feet he overset the table, with the aggravating result that the entire contents of his claret wine soured the woman's beautiful cream-colored silk skirt and waist and even the tips of her white shoes.

And in the excitement the waiter made good his escape. Brushing the lemonade and a dozen different concoctions from his eyes and face, Cyrus approached the dark, mortified beauty, and apologized.

"Believe me, Miss, it was an unavoidable accident. And I have spoiled this exquisite creation of the modiste's art!" apologetically, as he surveyed the red-stained skirt and waist. "If you do not object, Miss, I will call a carriage and see you home. Esplanade? Oh, yes, I know where it is," I heard him say, as he passed down the aisle and disappeared with the woman, leaving me to return to town alone or remain, as I should elect.



For about two weeks, then, he would leave the Countess and myself to go whither we would, whilst he would hasten to a certain number on Esplanade Street, where lived his new infatuation.

Men are most fickle, like a sunbeam in May or a butterfly on its wings of gold. Constancy like that of a woman knows them not. Every new face, figure or ankle has a potent charm for the masculine heart, and usurps in his soul the idol of his one time affection. And Cyrus, not being a paragon of virtue, was no exception to the general rule of his most volatile sex, though he tried to hide his secret from me with lies and quibbles.

He was painting this day, giving his picture the finishing touches, when the storm broke loose by the Countess saying:

"I thought, Cyrus, that you admired blonde women," eyeing him narrowly as she spoke.

"So I do. Have I not reproduced the most perfect blonde woman in existence, a real blonde, with glassing hair of gold and eyes like opal seas?"

"You flatterer."

"And you're the image of my Destiny, girly," rising and kissing her trembling lips.

"Did you kiss that dark beauty last night, Cyrus?"

"Who?"

"That buxum woman in green."



"Where did you see her?" frowning slightly.

"Corner Canal and Carondelet, where the both of you boarded a car for West End."

"What were you doing there? Spying on my movements?"

"No, sir. I came there by chance and not design."

"The woman is a lady."

"I doubt it not."

"And comes from a respectable family."

"Which is not questioned."

"Your inference, though, is that I have been caught at what a gentleman ought not to do."

"I infer nothing. I saw you kiss her several times, and asked the reason why. Do you expect me to allow every female that walks the streets to ply you with their filthy osculations?"

"Woman!"

"Man! beware, for you know not the lambent fire within my soul. I'd hesitate not a moment in throwing a glass of vitriol in her face if the provocation presented itself."

"You misjudge me, dear."

"We will leave this abominable nest just as soon as your picture is completed. How long before it is ready for shipment to New York?"

"About two more weeks."

"Then put some electricity in your fingers and



rush the work, for I am all eagerness to shake the dust of this infernal town from my feet and return East," and with a regal toss of her proud head she left the room and closed the door.

"Et', what is wrong with the little girl?"

"You heard what she accused you of, did you not?"

"Yes. And the worst of it is that I cannot defend myself. I did kiss the woman in question, though how this act of osculation became apparent to the Countess is beyond me. Do you think that she can read one's soul?"

"Has she not informed us that she is quite a medium, that she can go into a trance and see what is taking place at a distance with those she holds in esteem?"

"I do not believe it."

"I do."

He became morose and silent, working with ill-will for a few minutes, then gave up the task in despair.

"Have you nothing to say to me, your friend, Cyrus, relative to this dark-skinned beauty whom you have favored with so much attention of late?"

"Not much, save that I believe that I love her, that I have asked her to marry me, and——"

"What!"

"And that is all, save that the lady has given me



no decided answer as yet."

"Are you crazy, man?"

"Tear out my heart if you do not want me to fall prey to the seductive charm of woman."

"And what about the beautiful woman in there?" pointing to the sacred suite.

"To all intents and purposes I am her lover, Et', and yet, and yet I'm but a simpleton."

"What do you mean? Explain yourself."

"You goad me to desperation with your insane queries. Am I, then, a stick, a stone, devoid of all physical attributes of a healthy man? My very soul is on fire with the constant denial of the appetite of denied concupiscence, driving me to a madness worse than death. Am I expected to sit before this bundle of female beauty, feast my eyes upon her physical charms and simply dream of what might be mine but is not? I have asked her to marry me and been laughed at; I have beseeched her on my knees to be my common-law wife and been spurned. Nothing is granted me save a daily kiss, and they but fire my revolting soul to added heat and fury."

"What excuse was made you when your offer of marriage was rejected?"

"A woman's excuse."

"Which is?"

"Because."



"Come, now, what was the lady's excuse?"

"That I should school myself in patience and see whether I really was in love and wanted her for my wife."

"Logical advice, friend Cyrus."

With something akin to the devil's prayer he slammed the door to and disappeared, probably to take a long constitutional and clear the passion from his jumbled senses, whilst I, seated in a comfortable rocker, drew forth my bachelor friend, lighted it and dozed in a semi-conscious manner until the sun was high up in the heavens.

"Here's a message, Mr. Everett, from our mutual friend, Mr. Cassaway, Sr., asking that you, Cyrus, and I call at his suite at 2 P. M."

"Why?"

"I do not know. He says, though, that it is imperative."

"Then we had better keep the appointment," said I, as I rose to prepare for the interview.

"Where is Cyrus?"

"He left about an hour ago for a constitutional."

"I hope he does not keep us waiting," wherewith she departed to make her toilet.

I was dressed for nearly half an hour when Cyrus entered in a happy mood, again his buoyant self.

"We are invited to the New Denechaud Hotel,



Cyrus," said I, in way of an explanation for my street costume.

"Invited?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"Our mutual friend, Cassaway, the elder."

"Why?"

"I have not the slightest idea."

"Are you ready, Cyrus, dear?" asked my Countess, as she entered in a bewitching lavender dress of silk.

"Yes," and then he surveyed the exquisite dress for a moment. "When did you acquire this gorgeous costume, dear?"

"Do you like it?"

"Yes. And it sets most beautifully."

"Come now, for the time set for our reception is close at hand."

"Is this the goods, Et', that you saw the Count purchase at Holmes' the other day?"

"No, you simpleton! He bought a brown silk."

Whether it was brown or not I could not say. However, my spontaneous answer appeared to allay the equally spontaneous suspicion of my friend's mind, for he chattered gayly as we waited on the corner for a car to take us to our destination.

I, of course, had not the slightest idea as to why the three of us were wanted on imperative business,



for the lawyer who had gone to Key West, Florida, had reported that there was no tangible flaw in the divorce proceedings and subsequent marriage of the former wife of Cyrus and Wilburt Cassaway the younger.

Entering the elabroate suite we were robbed of our speech for several moments at the sight before us. Seated in a large rocker was Mrs. Florence Cassaway, holding in her lap a beautiful pink baby girl; off toward the east corner of the room, near the window, sat the present wife of Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., weeping; and in the middle of the floor stood the aged father of Wilburt.

"Come right up, friends, and congratulate my little girl and her baby."

Cyrus closed the door, and was the first to extend his felicitations to the young mother.

"Is is not sweet, Cyrus?" and the Countess took it in her arms and smothered it with kisses.

"Heavens, Et', there's my former wife!" he ejaculated to me in a startled undertone.

"Cyrus!" and the woman rose to her feet and started toward him. "Oh Cyrus, Cyrus!" and she burst into a violent fit of sobbing.

"Stop!" and the Countess stayed him as he was about to rush to the swaying woman in black.

"The woman is my wife."

"And drove you to the brink of insane murder!"



"Remain where you are, Cyrus!"

"Cyrus, have pity! Oh!" and she fell into the nearest chair and sobbed hysterically.

"Release me, Bangs!" glaring at me with dancing eyes of madness.

"There'll be time enough for a reconciliation, Cyrus. Florence, take the babe in the next room and return. And, boy, please remain where you are until I give you leave to act as you may elect."

"I'll do as I please. I am my own master, sir, and owe...."

The door flew open and there entered, to the astonishment of all, an officer handcuffed to Wilburt Cassaway, Jr.

"Oh!" and Florence Cassaway screened her face with her hands as she stood in the threshold, trembling with fear at the unexpected sight of the father of her babe in the toils of the Law.

"Close the door, Bangs!"

"What means this outrage upon my inalienable liberty? Release me, you scoundrel!" glaring at the officer with murderous eyes.

"Mr. Wilburt Cassaway, Jr., do you recognize the signature on this check?" holding to his eyes a yellow piece of paper.

"No, sir."

"What!"

"I never saw the writing before."



"You lie! It is a forgery in your handwriting, imitating my chirography on this check calling for ten thousand dollars. You villain!"

"Let me see the check, please?"

When it was handed to the second Mrs. Cassaway, she examined it long and earnestly, then returned it to the elder man and turned upon her captive husband with a vehement outburst of abuse.

"You forged the signature of your father to this check. You squandered my last cent at the race-track and left me on the point of starvation at the Gray Gables with \$1,000 worth of debts hanging over my head. You sold my automobile so as to bestow jewelry and other gifts on the women of the slums. You have robbed me of my wonted respect, made of me a divorcee, an outcast and a pauper. Brute! I should like to see you hang by the neck for your dastardly crimes. You lured me from a benevolent husband, squandered my fortune and left me to the mercy of Charity. You, the like of you, a gambler and a forger, are the father of the child to come! Oh, the disgrace, the heinous crime!"

"I deny the allegations made."

"Deny this, then, you scoundrel," and the Countess held before him the laughing babe in her arms.

"Whose child is this, Wilburt?"

"Not mi——"



"Whose?" and I thought that the irate man would bore his son's eyes out with the barrel of his pistol as he poked it into the trapped man's face.

"Mine, sir."

"Does it look like you?"

"It does."

"And you got your divorce on the grounds of infidelity?"

"Damn you!"

"Say that again and I will break every bone in your accursed body, you scoundrel. You stole the love and affection of your friend's wife, drove him to murder, outraged the fair name of your own wife, eloped beyond the jurisdiction of the New York courts, secured a divorce, married the woman whom you disgraced, squandered your fortune at the Race-Track, together with that of your wife's, and then, to cap the climax, forged my signature to a check for \$10,000. Do you know what I propose to do with you?"

"No. Neither do I care."

"I will make you by prosecuting you to the full extent of the law. And remember, southern penitentiaries are not like those of the East. A ball and chain will be attached to you, your hair will be shaved, like that of a baboon's, stripes will adorn you, and you will dig in the mines, a convict for ten or more years."



"You will suffer as much as I will by the transaction. The New York dailies antagonistic to your sheet will pounce upon the news and spread it broadcast."

"I care not. It could not damage me any more than your villainous escapades in New York, and your filing of papers for an absolute divorce did, naming an innocent man as co-respondent. Is this the result of your training, of the father-love lavished upon you without stint? Shame, Wilburt, shame!"

"You drive me mad. What care I for the past. Is it not beyond recovery? Have I not sundered the ties that bound me to you?"

"And to the mother of your child?"

"Yes. I have steeped my soul in the cup of debauchery and the hell of the race-track, and, like every other gambler, ended with forgery."

"So you have ceased denying your signature on this check?"

"Yes. The evidence against me is too overpowering. And, as life holds nothing for me save disgrace, I much prefer to end my days in a penitentiary."

"Officer, release my son for the time being. I will be responsible for him while he is in this room."

The handcuffs were unlocked, Wilburt stepped



a few feet toward the centre of the room, and the officer toward the door.

"Kindly await further orders in the corridor without."

"Janice!" from Cyrus as the officer departed, "Janice, my——"

"One moment, boy," restraining Cyrus by holding him back by the shoulder. "I am expecting a new actor at almost any moment, so till then, have patience, boy," and he forced Cyrus into a seat whilst the rest remained standing, wondering who the new arrival could possibly be.



## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE THUNDERBOLT.

The pall of mystery so suddenly thrust upon each individual, brewed thoughts of fear in each and every heart, save the elder Cassaway's. As far as I could see a new actor was out of place in this domestic tragedy. I thought of the gambler Cauliff, tried to figure him as a possibility in the expected role of the announced actor, yet, try as I would, the man was out of place.

And the elder Cassaway, with watch in hand, counting the minutes that appeared an eternity in passing, revealed neither by mien nor sign the identity of the expected arrival.

"Devil take it!" apostrophized my friend in an undertone to me, "who can he be expecting?"

"I cannot imagine, Cyrus."

"Blamed mystery, this entire procedure!"

I thought so, too, yet refrained from answering as I reviewed in my mind's eye the fearful past since last August. In all the terrible ordeals en-



acted by the different actors I perceived young Cassaway as the fundamental cause. He was the pivotal point round which the different scenes had rotated, and it appeared that he was chosen by Fate to be the centrifugal force governing the climax of this long-drawn out domestic warfare.

"Good evening, Mr. Cassaway!" and the Count von Stratskyi in his wonted faultless attire entered, silk hat, cane and gloves in one hand, as he started toward the elder man, then, strange as it might appear, halted spasmodically and surveyed the face and figure of Miss Silence standing in the threshold leading to the other apartment.

"Virginia!" dropping his hat, cane and gloves in consternation.

She gave no response, merely turned her face away from him and looked toward the window, unresponsive to the appeal in the man's eyes as he stood in a tremor of unalloyed excitement.

"Mr. Cassaway, why insult me with the presence of this profligate?"

"Pardon me, friend, but I think that you are a little too severe, both with me and your husband," smiling slightly as he picked up the Count's paraphernalia and deposited them on the table.

"Virginia, dear," going toward her with open arms.

"How dare you address me, you villain?"



"For the Lord's sake, Et', what's the meaning of this new scene?"

"I am at sea," and I was, too, and that so deeply that I simply stood there gasping like a veritable idiot at this new actor's mien, the bellicose woman glaring at him as if she thirsted for his life's blood.

"I have sought you for a year, dear."

"Dear? You brute! I was never such to you save when you needed more ready cash to satisfy your thirst for vice and crime."

"Mr. Cassaway, cannot you make her understand what I have failed to do?"

"You must fight your own battles, Count."

"Why do you not help your friend in his trying ordeal, his struggle for a reconciliation, Wilburt? You both hobnobbed it at the race-track," and I perceived the look of satisfaction light the woman's face at this subtle thrust at her felon husband.

"He spent his own money!" and Wilburt bit his lip in shame and anger.

"And mine, too."

"You lie, woman!"

"Remember in whose presence you are, son."

"I spent nobody's money, madame."

"You ran through mine just the same, you rake!"

"Virginia, how can you be so cruel to me, dear?"

"You helped my husband to form a pool at the



race-track and lose my money, Count. Why deny it?"

"Your husband?"

"Yes."

"Madame must be mistaken. On my honor as a gentleman, I do not know you nor your husband."

"Count, you barefaced scoundrel, how dare you call my wife a liar?"

"And who are you, sir?" haughtily, as he surveyed the bristling man before him.

"Do you mean to throw me down, to deny your past friendship with me and my wife?"

"Mr. Cassaway," turning toward the elder man, "cannot you rectify this man's error?"

"If you weren't in the presence of these ladies, Count, I'd thrash you within an inch of your worthless life."

"You plebeian! How dare you, a stranger, insult a nobleman?"

"A nobleman? Ye gods! The like of you a member of real aristocracy? Heavens!" laughing raucously into the Count's face.

"This is an unpardonable insult, one that I will not forget in great haste, Mr. Cassaway," grabbing his hat, cane and gloves and making his way toward the door.

"What did you come for, Count? To appease the wrath of the gods, your wife, and fasten your



long, bony fingers on the remnants of her dowry?" asked Cyrus, eyes glowing with hatred as he approached the raging nobleman.

"You pig!" and with a thunderous crescendo, the oath that parted his spastic lips rang through the room like the report of a gun, followed by the Count's exit and the slamming of the door after him, leaving us all in a momentary stupor.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" and the elder Cassaway sprawled himself in the nearest chair and split his fat sides with shouts of laughter, to the amazement of his son and the rest of the spectators.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" and Cyrus seated himself and stared at the still laughing man before him.

"I fail to see an apparent reason for your boisterous laughter, sir. Neither can I understand why you should have invited my former husband to meet me here with the intention of insulting me with his hypocritical words of endearment."

"My dear young friend——"

"I can neither be dear to you nor a friend, Mr. Cassaway. If I were such, you would not delight in thus insulting me."

"Come in!" called I in response to a sudden knock, and in another moment the Count entered, somewhat bashful, to be sure, as he stopped abruptly the moment he espied Cyrus and the elder Cassaway.



"What do you want?" asked Cyrus as he sprang to his feet.

"Sir!"

"I'll wring your countly neck if you look at me with such contempt."

"Count, you villain!" and the younger Cassaway approached him in wrath. "What do you mean by denying your relationship with me and my wife?"

"I deny our friendship? God forbid!"

"Stop it!"

"Are you sober, friend?"

"Who are you?" clutching him by the collar.

"Your friend, the Count Stratskyi."

"And I?"

"Wilburt Cassaway of New York and New Orleans."

"And the woman in lavender?"

"My wife."

"And the woman in black?"

"Your wife."

"And this man?"

"Your father. But, why ask me such ridiculous questions? And do release my collar, please."

"You made me out a liar but a few minutes ago," releasing the Count.

"You must be mistaken, sir."

"Not only that, but you denied all knowledge



of our association at the race-track where we formed a pool and lost \$87,000. Deny this again and I will break your royal bones."

"I do not deny it, friend."

"You are a degenerate offspring of royalty, Count, and lack all semblance of manhood. Have I not given you to understand by signs and words that you are most repulsive to me?"

"To the sorrow of my soul, yes."

"Then why did you address me with words of endearment but a few minutes ago?"

"You, madame?"

"Yes, I," stepping toward him in rage. "I detest you beyond the expression of words."

"My dear Virginia——"

"Cut out your words of endearment if you care to leave this room with a whole skin."

"Mr. Cassaway, you sent for me, and why? To be insulted by each of your guests here?"

"You are a man, Count, and well able to protect yourself. Just what your motive may be in first denying acquaintanceship with my son and what took place between you two at the race-track at City Park I do not know. Some ulterior motive prompted you to lie. Why?"

"I did not."

"You did, sir."

"Why continue to insult me in your apart-



ments?"

"Why lie with given intent?"

"Virginia," facing about, "did I deny my acquaintance with the younger Cassaway?"

"You did."

Baffled with impotent rage he spun around on his high Cuban heels and addressed me in a sibilant tone:

"Mr. Bangs, may I rely upon your honor as a gentleman to speak the truth?"

"You may."

"Have I lied in the presence of these ladies and gentlemen?"

"Most maliciously."

"Sacramento!" and with a savage look in his eyes he left the room, banging the door after him.

"Mr. Cassaway, the action of this crazy Count is getting beyond me. What motive have you in inviting him to this family gathering? Why are you convulsed with glee? I see nothing laughable in the disgraceful proceedings," said Cyrus, as he arose.

"What do you intend to do with me, father? I am prepared for the worst."

"Cyrus, boy, you are not angry, are you?"

"I am," whereupon he walked over to the Countess and began a whispered conversation with her.



"Mr. Bangs, what do you make of this Count's peculiar behavior?"

"That he is drunk or on the verge of lunacy."

"Do you think so?"

"I do."

"And you, Florence?"

"I coincide with Mr. Everett Bangs."

"I don't."

"What?"

"No, Bangs."

"The man's crazy as a March hare."

"Oh, no, he's not."

"And why not?"

"I have come to demand an apology from you, Mr. Cassaway, and if it is not forthcoming I shall force you to a duel," and the fiery Count stood himself immediately in front of the portly person of our host, face black with impotent fury.

"Have I insulted you, Count?" rising slowly.

"You have, sir, and that most egregiously."

"Then pray accept my humble apology."

"Good! Just why I have been used as a cat's-paw by you and your guests is unknown to me."

"Just why you denied all knowledge of my son and the race-track, then retracted, is beyond me too, Count. It appears to me that you possessed some sinister design in thus first denying and then retracting."



"I did not."

"How dare you throw the lie in my face?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Cassaway."

"You villain! How dare you call my father a liar?" and Wilburt sprang toward the Count, face livid with carnal rage.

"I do not call your father a liar, provided, of course, that this gentleman is your sire."

"By what right do you doubt my assertion?"

"By your actions, sir. This man appears refined, despite the apparent insult meted me, whilst you show every ear-mark of a ribald bringing-up, coarse features and coarse of speech."

"You——"

"Return to your seat, son!" thundered his father as he pushed the raging man away from the Count. "The man speaks the truth. You do not represent me in the least, neither in face, figure nor your mode of living."

"Who is that man talking to my wife, Mr. Cassaway?"

"And is she your wife?"

"Most assuredly."

"You lie, villain! I divorced you as you are aware."

"Divorced me?" in horror, retreating as if struck with a blow.

"You are so innocent, Count, that I am afraid



you will sprout a pair of wings overnight and disappear from the haunts of living man."

He winced at this satirical shaft from the woman's biting tongue, and looked helplessly from me to the giggling Cassaway the elder.

"This climate appears to impair one's mind, judging from the evidence at hand."

"We are all sane people, Count, have no fear."

"I doubt it, sir. My wife denies me, that man there who appears to be your offspring lies about me, though, up to a few minutes ago we had never met; the woman in black, his wife, hurls her shaft of mendacity at me for no other palpable reason than to espouse the secret cause of the man you claim is your son. Why all this mystery, this subterfuge and unashamed rascality?"

"Count, if you again deny the truth I will have a warrant sworn out for your arrest on the charge of embezzlement."

"Madame!"

"Do you still persist in denying the fact that you gambled away my fortune with the tacit understanding of my husband?"

"I deny it, madame."

"And do you deny squandering my private fortune within six months after our marriage?"

"I do."

"You infernal scoundrel!" and Cyrus sprang



across the room to hurl himself at the retracting Count.

"Bangs, you meddler!" and he glared into my eyes with bestial heat as I gripped him by the hands and held him fast.

"I challenge you to a duel, sir," and with his glove he slapped the senior Cassaway's face, hurried to the door, jerked it open, then recoiled from an incoming person.

"Sacramento!" he cursed as he sprang to his feet and smote the newcomer with his cane.

"Great Caesars!" and Cyrus clung to me with hands that gripped my muscles like a pair of vises.

"You!"

"You!"

"Mr. Cassaway, the scoundrel who did the lying," said the Count as he approached the centre of the room.

"Mr. Cassaway, the scoundrel who did the lying," and Count number two approached his double, livid with rage.

In all my life I have not been a spectator to such utter consternation as took place in the next moment. A stifled cry from Miss Silence, a resonant oath from Cyrus, and from the rest gasps of wonder and amazement, whilst the two trapped Counts, identical in dress, figure, face and carriage, stood facing each other, like two savages at bay,



awaiting a favored opportunity of assault.

"You villain!"

"You rogue!"

"Who is who?" and Mr. Cassaway stood himself between the two devil-possessed Counts, his blue eyes still twinkling with mischievous laughter as he surveyed the black faces before him.

"Adrian!"

"Adrian!"

"You villain! Your name is Adrian and mine is Gustave."

"You whelp! Mine name is Gustave and yours is Adrian. Why lie about it in the presence of these ladies and gentlemen?"

"You renegade!"

"You reprobate!" and these strange men glared at each other with murder in their hearts and souls.

"We have heard enough superlative adjectives for the while, Counts. Mrs. Stratskyi, will you be so kind as to step up to these men and identify your husband, the man you married?"

She did so, and studied both faces for several minutes; and, as a dark frown mantled her mouth I knew that she had failed in her identification.

"There are two Counts here."

"Yes."

"One of them you married."



"Yes."

"Which one?"

"I do not know."

"What!" incredulously, eyeing her furtively as she again inspected the duplicates before her.

"Are you Gustave?"

"Yes."

"Adrian, you arch scoundrel! why call yourself Gustave when you are Adrian? Virginia, believe me, this brother of mine lies."

"Virginia, dear, you must recognize in your heart that I am your beloved husband."

"By the eternal heavens, I swear that I will kill you, Adrian, if you persist in this devilish impersonation."

"And I will have you arrested for this masquerading under my inalienable title."

"Be seated, Counts, and let us endeavor to straighten out this herculean tangle," whereupon all took seats and surrounded these remarkable doubles as our self-appointed inquisitor cleared his throat and began his strange catechising.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### WHO'S WHO?

"In my long career I have heard of twins, seen as many as fourscore ten from time to time, yet never have I seen the like of you two, who, for some strange reason, have carried your likeness to such an extent as to affect each other's dress, mannerisms, monocle, etc. What ulterior motive is there for this strange masquerading of the other's personality? One of you must be an unmitigated scoundrel and a liar, and I expect to worm the truth from you or lodge you both in jail. You speak first," tapping one of the men on the knee.

"Mr. Cassaway, may I speak unreservedly in the presence of these ladies?"

"You may, so long as you refrain from shocking their modesty."

"To begin with, we are twins, I being the first-born and he the second."

"It is not so."



"Hold your tongue. You will be given a chance to defend yourself in due course of time. Proceed!"

"There has ever been such close resemblance between us that even our mother had great difficulty in distinguishing us apart. Later, when we joined the army, I got court-martialed three times and finally was expelled on account of my brother's wild escapades, and he found himself in jail on account of mine. We were both rather wild, as young noblemen are wont to be, having each a handsome income, about 75,000 francs a year.

"It was during a barroom broil that my brother received an ugly injury to his head and became insane, was placed in an insane asylum, where he remained for nearly three years, until his escape four weeks after my marriage to my wife here.

"Was I not a faithful husband to you during the first four weeks of our married life, Virginia?"

"Yes. But four weeks is a very short time, Count."

"I grant it. Now listen: I left, as you, Virginia, must remember, one sunny day to go to town and arrange a business transaction with my lawyer, was set upon by two strange men, drag-



ged before a Judge, convicted as an escaped lunatic, and carried off in posthaste to the asylum from which my brother had escaped, whilst he, (do not be shocked, ladies) returned to my castle and purloined the nuptial pleasures that were mine by virtue of my marriage. He having been adjudged insane, and being single, the entire residue of his fortune reverted to me, save such allowance as the Court had set aside for his maintenance at the retreat for the incurably insane. And, when through the connivance of Fate I was forced to take his place, he began to squander my fortune and yours, Countess, shaming you with his disgraceful living.

“This past March a year ago I was declared sane by a court, returned to my castle and was denied admittance by the carekeeper. Even my lawyers refused to believe me at first, though I finally succeeded in convincing them of my brother's rascality. I have hunted for you, Virginia, since the day of my release, wandering through Europe and, finally in Paris, I learned that you had left your husband and gone to America with the intention of securing a divorce, taking with you your child. Is this true, wife?” and I noted a genuine tear well in his gray eyes as he watched the flame-lit face of her he had espoused.



"Yes. I divorced my husband on account of his terrible cruelty."

"And yet I was most loving and tender to you, dear!"

"That will do, Count. Now," facing Count number two, "let us hear what you may have to say in defense of your honor, sir."

"Mr. Cassaway, believe me, and you, too, Virginia. I most deeply regret that I am called upon to throw my brother's lie into his face. It is as he so cunningly avers, that we are twins, that he was court-martialed for my wild escapades in the army and I arrested for his base mode of living. Six months languished I in a filthy prison because he had wronged a beautiful peasant maid; and, when finally released after paying a heavy fine to the state and an equally large emolument to the girl's parents, I determined to have a lunacy commission appointed to examine my brother as to his sanity. He was subsequently arrested, examined by the commission, adjudged insane with maniacal tendencies, and was incarcerated in an asylum for the criminal insane, where he remained until, as he just asseverated, he was released by a commission that pronounced him harmless about a year ago. In the interim I had taken a trip to America, visited Chicago, where I met Virginia here, married



her, and returned to my native country. Our temperaments being so diametrically opposed to each other we separated after six months of married life, she returning to her parents in this country and I embarking on a constitutional that took me through Europe, visiting Budapest, Constantinople, London, Madrid, Paris, Venice, and Monte Carlo, where, at the last named, I lost considerable of my fortune. After a few years of wandering I tired of the utter frivolity of society, saw the error of my ways, returned to America with the intention of seeking a reconciliation with my wife on account of the son that had been born us, and whom I had not seen. My wife's parents having died, I experienced great difficulty in discovering her whereabouts. I employed detectives to help me in my trouble, located my wife at Charleston, S. C., from whence she mysteriously disappeared, located her a second time at Newport News, Va., where, just as I had summoned my strength for the crucial moment and sue for forgiveness, she again vanished and succeeded in eluding my every effort until a few weeks ago, when, through an accidental meeting with your son at the races, I learned of her presence in this city with a party of friends who are now listening to this strange recital of mine.



"My brother Adrian, knowing of course the wild escapades of my youth, has profited by them in a most ingenious manner, fabricating there-with a tale of romance and of tragedy that appears to bear the stamp of truth. However, now that you know both sides, you can readily see through his attempted subterfuge; at least you can, Virginia, can you not, dear? And, whilst I am at this humiliating confession may I not sue for pardon?" and he held his hand toward her, whilst two great, big tears rolled down his sorrow-streaked face.

"One of you two has lied. Who is the guilty party?" growled their inquisitor as he clenched his fists in wrath.

"I have spoken the truth," from the first speaker.

"Believe me, sir, I have not deviated an iota from the truth," from the second speaker.

"Devil take you royal scamps! One of you is lying. Mrs. Stratskyi, can you, after having heard their confession, say with any show of certainty which one is your husband?"

"I cannot. Each appears to be trading on the other's knowledge."

"Bangs, who's who?"

"You will have to call upon Solomon for the solution of this perplexing conundrum."



"I will call upon the police for the solving of this problem if you two persist in your deception."

"Mendacity is beneath my dignity, sir."

"Prevarication never knew me as kin, sir."

"I believe that the both of you are villains."

"Sir!"

"Sir!"

"By heavens!" and he slammed his fist on his knee with vengeance. "Do both of you scallwags take me for a fool? Are you trying to make a laughing stalk out of me and my friends?"

"I assure you, monsieur——"

"That's my husband, Mr. Cassaway!"

"Take that, villain!" and the two probably would have killed each other then and there had not Cyrus and Wilburt separated them.

"This is my seat."

"This is my seat."

"You lie, Adrian."

"Adrian, you scoundrel!"

"Be seated, you bloodthirsty villains! Now," when the two combatants were seated, "Mrs. Stratskyi, point out your husband again. They got mixed in the scuffle."

I could not help but smile as she stood there, baffled again in her attempt to identify her one time lord and master.



"Can you point to the man you designated as your ex-husband a few minutes ago?"

"No." And she whispered in his ear. "Ask them again this question: 'Do you both intend to make a laughing stalk of me and my friends?'"

"Do you men care to be lodged in jail?"

"We do not," in one voice.

"Do you both intend to make a laughing stalk of me and my friends?"

"God forbid, monsieur."

"I'm a gentleman, monsieur."

"Who's who, Mrs. Stratskyi?"

"I cannot say, seeing that both are imitating the other."

"To all intents and purposes you two foreigners are lying for some sinister design. Both of you are scoundrels, and both of you ought to be locked up in jail, and I would send you there if I only knew of a tangible cause that would land you behind the bars. As it is I can only show you both the door. This woman here has married one of you, which one though is still a secret. However, to guard against any further molestation from either of you money-hunting rakes I will see to it that she secures a second divorce, thus frustrating any premeditated designs upon the remnants of her fortune by either of you unprincipled rogues. There's the door, you," point-



ing to one of the Counts, who thereupon rose and made haste to vacate.

"And you, too," and in another moment the second Count had disappeared.

"I should like to know who's who," and the Countess sighed to herself as if with weariness.

"Aye, who's who?" and Cyrus proceeded to pace the floor of the room, his mind in a quandary on which no ray of light descended to elucidate the perplexing problem.

"Wilburt, come here."

The young man, red in face with shame, appeared before his father, speculating as to what was in store for him.

"What ought I to do with you?"

"I cannot answer this question."

"What would you do under the existing circumstances?"

"I cannot say how I would conduct myself, father."

"Are you pleased at the knowledge that you are a father?"

"I am, sir; before my God I am."

"Why have you acted as you have toward your poor wife?"

"I was infatuated."

"What became of your religion?"

"The eyes of passion know no religion save



that of the law of Nature."

"Wisely spoken, son. When the call of Nature comes a-cooing to two hot-blooded youngsters, the teaching of Church, mother and father is forgotten in the wild sweat of concupiscence. However, I hope you do not mean to present this excuse as an extenuation for your compromising conduct?"

"I do not."

"Suppose now—mind you, this is only a plausibility—the heinous charge of forgery should be withdrawn from you, then what?"

I saw the light of relief mantle his face as he fixed his eyes upon the downcast ones of his former wife; noted, too, the large tears well in the eyes of the woman in black whom he had lured from her husband and home and dragged to the gutter of actual want.

"Florence!" and he hastened to her with open arms, "can you, will you forgive me, take me back to your heart?"

"Daughter, come here."

Her eyes were downcast as she obeyed him. Falling upon her knees and laying her head on his hands, she sobbed like a child.

"And this is the woman whom you outraged!"

"Father, forgive me!" and on his knees he fell,



a repentant prodigal son suing for forgiveness at the eleventh hour.

"Son, son, you have very nearly murdered your poor old dad with your acts of violence against this little girl and me."

"Florence, dear," and he stole his right arm around her slender waist. "Look at me, wife, and say that you, too, have forgiven me, and that you will take me back. For the baby's sake, dear, if not for my own."

"Wilburt, my husband!" and she closed her arms around his neck and wept with unconcealed emotion as she clung to him with joy at this unexpected reunion.

"Call the officer, Bangs.

"Wilburt, my son, prayer has conquered the devil in your soul, therefore I forgive you, and take you back to my heart.

"Officer, destroy the warrant that I had sworn out for my son's arrest," and with an obsequious bow the factotum of peace made his exit, tearing the warrant as he did so.

"Mr. Cassaway, allow me to say a few words, please."

"Do so, boy, by all means."

"Listen, you scoundrel," and he shook his huge fist in Wilburt's face. "What about the woman you lured from my home?"



"I was just coming to that, Cyrus."

"You were?"

"Yes, boy."

"Return her her lost honor and I, too, will take her back, love and cherish her as when first I wooed her."

"Oh, Cyrus! Cyrus!" and with a heartbreaking sob the woman flung herself on her knees before him, sobbing hysterically.

"My boy——"

"Can you restore her priceless honor?"

"Would to God that I could!"

"Then, woman, you are lost!" stepping to one side.

"Cyrus! Cyrus!"

"You are lost, woman."

"My God, Cyrus!" and she sprang to her feet and started toward him.

"Stand! Remain where you are!"

"For heaven's sake, Cyrus, show me mercy!"

"Return to me with your honor and I will be to you what I was ere the shadow of Doom crossed our threshold."

"Oh, it's lost! lost!" wringing her hands in grief.

"Cyrus, boy!" approaching him.

"Stand! There is a marked difference between my wife and me, and that of your son and his



wife. Society will welcome the return of the prodigal son, the licentious husband, and greet him with open arms, licking his hands and fawning upon his every smile. He has scaled the crags of hell, feasted upon its poison, shared its secrets, and basked his soul in its lusts. He has made of my wife a prostitute, dragged her to his brute level, and leaves her stranded in the sewer of lost womanhood, with the brand of incest burnt into her name with a scarlet hue. Take her by the hand and lift her up to the level of Respectability; blot from her once fair escutcheon the damnable infamy foisted upon it by your son; resurrect her honor from the putrid slum of depravity; strike from her burning memory the acid-eating sting of outraged Conscience, and I will take her back to my heart as your daughter-in-law has taken back her husband."

"Oh, Cyrus, you ask much, so much!"

"Not any more than you will ask and receive for your son. Polite Dames of Society will tilt their fine noses in disgust at the mere mention of her name, though they themselves are spoilers of the bed of secret concupiscence. Titular matrons of the gilded set of Aristocracy will sneer at her, lift their dainty skirts, fearing that they might become contaminated, though they themselves are viler than the daughters of an-



cient Babylon. The woman has fallen, pounce upon her with both feet and hands; drag her through the lanes of Notoriety; drub her name with mud and insults for, she's but a woman that has been found out. Proclaim her hussy, minx, as the case may be; snub her at every given chance; drive her to an early grave so that the coarse worms and gnats may feast upon her flesh and bones, and worship the scoundrel who ruined her honor and her name.

“Like hyenas upon a mountain-top, bivouacking for the smell of a decaying carcass, the women of your Smart Society are on the *qui vive*, awaiting with devilish eagerness the chance to flaunt this woman's past into her face, to brand her ‘That Mrs. Scencio who eloped with that handsome Apollo, Wilburt Cassaway, Jr.’ Like a lot of shedevils they are awaiting this opportunity of displaying their contempt for a fallen member of their tinseled set, gloating at this chance of thus showing their superiority over their fallen sister by acts of abominable rudeness and savage lust of stinging slurs, fighting over the whispered evil like mongrel curs over a bone.”

Truth hurts, thought I, as I listened to this brutal arraignment of the woman by my friend; aye, its sting is like unto the bite of an adder; yet,



how else are we to eradicate the existing evils if none of us has enough backbone to raise his voice and cry the evils down?

"Cyrus Scencio, you are inhuman!"

"Much less so, friend, than the members of your society."

"I had no hand in the making of its iron-clad laws."

"Neither had I. Your son has ravaged the honor of my wife, made of her what she is to-day. Will you provide for her future wants? Will you be a father to her coming child, robbed of its rightful parent through the laxity of our divorce courts?"

"I will, boy. I'll raise the child as my own, care for its mother as if she were my daughter."

"Wilburt Cassaway, you have outraged my honor and my trust of friendship with hellish foresight and with demoniacal precision, and came within a hair's breadth of paying for your dastardly crime with your rotten blood. Let this knowledge be remembered by you, and see to it that the future brings us not in contact, for, by my soul I swear that at this moment I could rip the flesh from your bones and fling it to the dogs. Let this be a warning. Come, friends," facing about and addressing the Countess and myself, "let us be going."



"Cyrus! Cyrus! have pity!" and she flung herself in his path and tried to detain him with hysterical strength.

Gently but firmly he released her hands and made his way from the room, his jaw set in determination as he marched down the corridor, fighting down the still smouldering desire to take back to his heart the woman who had so nearly wrecked his life, his hopes and aspirations, and beached him upon the path that leads to a murderer's row and the gallows.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE TRAGEDY.

Five weeks had passed since the never-to-be-forgotten scene in the apartments of the elder Cassaway at the New Denechaud hotel, days wherein my friend painted with sudden eagerness during the day and spent the nights with a woman whom I had met but once. And the relationship between him and his beautiful model was strained to the point where the traveler meets the "parting of the ways."

The double Counts from Hungary had departed for regions unknown; the Cassaways had returned to New York, where the wheels of the law had been oiled and put in motion for the purpose of annulling the younger Cassaway's second marriage on the grounds of a technicality in his divorce proceedings, the woman in the case being installed in a temporary home in this city by the magnanimous millionaire, with ample



funds to her credit in a local bank to provide for her mundane wants.

The picture being declared finished it was exhibited to Miss Silence and myself, then packed and boxed for shipment to a New York Fifth avenue art dealer.

The hour was about 7 P. M. Cyrus had during the day received from a local tailor a new full dress suit, together with such accessories as led me to believe that he was to attend a formal banquet. Of late he had been most non-committal relative to his movements, and as he donned his new outfit, silk hat and opera cape and remarked that he would see me in Miss Silence's room, I refrained from injecting any queries as to where he was bound to this night.

And when he was gone, and I, seated in my rocker smoking and speculating whether my hot-blooded Southern friend really intended to marry the dark-skinned beauty of Esplanade street, I became aware of a familiar voice of a woman in the next room as that belonging to the former wife of Cyrus. The suites were separated by a large folding door, locked from one side and bolted on the other, yet a conversation carried on in an ordinary tone was plainly audible in my room, when one wished to play the role of a court eavesdropper and station himself with one



ear close to the keyhole, the which I did for the nonce. I could even see the two women as they faced each other, my lady Silence robed in a fantastic lingerie called a receiving gown, no sleeves, low neck, a long train, and her priceless string of virgin pearls gleaming upon her wax-like throat, with a brilliant diamond tiara sparkling in her golden tresses, whilst the other woman was dressed in a smart street costume, a dark bronze velvet tailor made suit, most becoming to her strange beauty.

"I hear from most reliable authority that Cyrus is to be married to-night at the residence of his bride-to-be, Esplanade near Clayborne, to a Miss Viola du Louque."

"I am aware of this intelligence, madame."

"The woman in question is unsuited to him, is another member of Smart Society, and will surely cause him many hours of heartaches and keen anxiety."

"And why?"

"Because Cyrus is a man with domestic proclivities, Bohemian in his ideas, and is not fond of the pink-teas, balls, and horse shows so delightful to the women of our gilded set."

"You appear to understand his nature most thoroughly, Mrs. Cassaway."

"Yes. And to the sorrow of my soul I have



learned the value of his sublime nature, what he once was to me, and what he might have been."

"The sublimeness of his nature, madame, has been lost in the garnered past. At present he is like a great many men you know, coarse of thought and evil of mind."

"I do not believe it."

"Why have you come to me?"

"To save him."

"From what?"

"From his folly and the woman who would wreck his genius."

"As you have done in the past."

"As I have done in my blindness."

"I would help him if I knew how."

"Cannot you save him?"

"And turn his love-starved heart to you?"

"Would it not be an act of charity?"

"I'll save him!"

"Oh, you are so kind."

"For myself, madame."

A gasp of pain pierced the suspended silence as the woman reeled as if struck with a blow.

"For yourself!" she finally echoed in a choking voice.

"Why not? You drove him to the brink of hatred and of murder; you turned his feet toward a prisoner's cell and the gallows; you



wrecked his robust health and made of him a raving idiot, parched with the thirst of vengeance. I picked him up, nursed him with a mother's tenderness, schooled him in the art of patience, stripped myself to the skin and posed for him, so that the ambition of his life might be realized. Am I not deserving of his love, the tenderness of his affection, and of his caresses?"

"You shock me, Countess."

"Call me Silence as heretofore, for the title of Countess is but an empty one to me. You say that you are shocked? And pray whyfore? I buried my modesty in the pool of love; I drove from my thoughts the knowledge of Sex and revealed myself in all my natural beauty of tingling flesh and moulded limbs so that he, the man you drove to the temple of outraged gods, might profit by the revelation of a concealed symmetrical body and win his spurs. What thoughts were mine as I thus stood revealed to the man who was your husband, the angels alone know. I marshalled the battery of my determination and fought the assaults of clamoring Passion; I drowned the voice of ringing Sex in giant battles that left me weak of heart and limb, a smouldering volcano in my soul that died a desperate death in the struggle of ascending Virtue. I



have won a greater victory than did Michael over the Prince of Morning. I have saved the man's honor, his virtue and his name, the garbled accounts of palavering women to the contrary notwithstanding."

"May I ask your future purpose regarding Cyrus and yourself?"

"You may, and listen: The restraining leash of Virtue has melted away this day, my conscious faculties are on fire with the desire of reciprocal love; I am mad with the engulfing surge of an inward heat that will stoop to the red hand of murder if not soothed by the man who would fling me aside, now that his life's aspirations are about to be consummated."

"Then you proffer me no morsel of hope?"

"None whatever. You possessed his love and affection, you were the arbiter of his destiny, his fame and renown, and crucified his soul with well calculated acts of intrigue that bit his animation like Torpor plasmic flesh."

"Then I am lost! lost! lost!" and with a pitiful moan the once proud woman reeled from the room, convulsed with grief that knew no soothing balm in retrospect nor prospect, legitimate prey to the food of Remorse and the sorrow of an everlasting past.

"Oh, I am mad, mad, with the lunacy of an im-



becile," pacing to and fro in wild steps, the frou-frou of her silken petticoats sounding like the sibilant hiss of a snake that proclaims its warning with lightning flashes of its darting tongue.

"I have fought the giant forces of assailing Hell, smothered the crying voice of Passion, drove into the very vitals of my animation the spear of self-imposed rebuff; and, this is my reward!"

"Ah! I hear his steps, denied Love's steps!" and she made haste to draw from behind a portiere a large canvas, and place it on an easel in the corner, then drew from her *escritoire* a pint bottle of wine and proceeded to fill two glasses, setting them on the round table in the centre of the room.

"Love's potion, this!" and into one of the glasses she emptied a white-looking powder just as Cyrus wrapped for admittance.

I had heard her dwell upon these love powders so often of late that I laughed softly to myself, speculating what effect one of these mysterious concoctions would have upon my friend.

"Good evening, Silence!" and he deposited his silk hat and white kid gloves on the table, then surveyed the woman before him.

"Are you prepared for your wedding, Cyrus?"

At this his face flushed crimson, a startled look



crept into his eyes as fear poised upon his heart and feasted on his senses.

"Silence, dear, you are not yourself to-night. What has perturbed you so?"

"Your wife was here."

"My wife!"

"Yes."

"What did she want?"

"Your affection and your love."

"She cannot span the chasm between us at this late date."

"She also imparted to me a most delectable bit of news."

"Its nature?"

"That you are to be married to-night to a Miss Viola du Louque."

"For that reason I am here. You probably are aware of the fact that I have been keeping company with a certain young lady on Esplanade street?"

"I have known it for some time, Cyrus."

"Do you know why I am going to take her to wife?"

"Yes. You have grown tired of blondes, and wish a brunette for a change."

"You do me an injustice, Silence."

"Forgive me, Cyrus. I forgot that you have sprouted angelic appendages."



"Why this satire?"

"So you are going to be married to-night, dear?"

"Yes."

"Then," handing him the glass with the powder, "let us drink to the success of your new matrimonial venture, Cyrus."

Glasses clinked, each drained the wine to the last drop, whilst I laughed till the tears rolled down my face as I speculated as to the success of Love's conjured potion upon my contumacious friend.

"Heavens! but this wine is bitter!" making a wry face as he wiped his lips.

"Now listen: I told you on a former occasion, not so many months ago, that you were a brute, and it appears that I have not erred in my deduction."

"Silence, dear, you are most rude."

"With the lance of Truth. I have loved you with all the strength of my heart, lavished my affection upon you as no other woman has ever done without proffering you the sweets of flesh. I have endeavored to show you that I can love you, be near you, fondle you with kisses, and yet be virtuous. To-day was to be the dawn of my capitulation to your brute will, the surrender of queen Virtue to the shambles of king Passion, the



death of Opposition and the fulfillment of dastard Hopes. You have reproduced on canvas an image that would bring you fame, renown and glory from the coffers of the patrons of art, and the National Academy of Fine Arts. I have loaned you without compensation the sight and study of my figure, you to reap immortal fame and I the proverbial mess of pottage, the heritage of every woman who trades her sublime nudity for an artist's behalf."

"Oh, I am sick, Silence, sick in my stomach with a deadly pain," and he staggered to the nearest seat as the woman continued:

"You are groomed for your marriage, but not to a woman."

"Who with, dear? Not you?"

"No sir."

"Then who?"

"Death!"

My very knees gave way as the man rasped in a throaty voice:

"Death! Death!" then struggled to his feet and swayed like a drunken man.

"Yes. Everlasting Subjugation in the bowels of king Torpor. You are poisoned, and by my agency; and, over in the corner there lies your shattered painting of Venus Taking Her Bath."

His fast glassing eyes were riveted upon the



slit and mangled canvas for several seconds, then with a devilish oath he made a lunge for his steel paper cutter lying on the table and, with a savage thrust at the woman, plunged the weapon into her breast, reeled for a minute, then tumbled over beside his prostrate victim.

I ran to the door and hammered at its resisting panels with insane rage and fury; the silence of the hall I ravaged with blood-curdling curses as I returned to my own room, and with demoniacal energy, wedged an iron poker between the two doors, and strove with giant strength of despair to force them apart and gain admittance to the murderous scene.

A creaking, rasping sound, then a violent fall over a piece of furniture, and I shot through the aperture as if propelled by a catapult.

"Mr. Everett, there is a glass containing a powerful antidote on the dresser there. Make haste and give it to your friend."

I knocked several chairs helter-skelter as I obeyed the woman, forced the set teeth of Cyrus and was just in the act of pouring the contents down his throat when I stopped spasmodically, the sweat oozing from my pores in large, dank, drops.

"Is this more poison?" I rasped in awe.

"No. Hurry, you fool!"



Down his throat I poured the concoction, crossed my sinful breast and consigned my friend to a merciful fate.

"There!" and the woman threw from her the steel cutter and rose to her feet.

"Are you not hurt?" I gasped.

"No. The point got wedged between the ribs of steel in my corset."

For a moment she stood there, surveying her lover in the throes of mighty death, then fell beside him on her knees and sobbed convulsively.

"Cyrus, dear, do you not love your little girl, your Silence?"

"I'm dreaming, dear."

"Of me?"

"Of you."

"Tell me your dream."

"I see your strands of fine-spun golden hair flying in the air above the nocturnal clouds; and I am in your arms, speeding to the home of Cupid's fancy realm, where bowered dells of tangled roses reach their perfumed tendrils to the silver heights of paradise, and violet leaves are strewn upon the floor as bed for you and I."

"What else see you?"

"Stop conjuring this dying man," and I made fast of her bare arms and tried to drag her from her posture, when all the evil sorcery of the In-



fernal Regions rose in their might and smote me stark and dumb with terror.

"I see ourselves in a perfumed vale where gorgeous birds in rainbow feathers sport in the empyreal air, and souls released from the bondage of narrow thoughts and perverted ethics, commingle with their chosen mates and bow to Love, supreme in heights eternal."

"Whom do you love, Cyrus!"

"You, Silence, with a wild abandonment of my soul that defies the wrinkled visage of King Death, and the charnel tombs of his frozen realm."

"Then this is our wedding night, dear?"

"Aye, to feast upon the spread of rapturous love and drink its wine with kisses long and tender," and he stole his arms around the slender neck of his enchantress, and kissed her long and passionately.

"Arise!"

Slowly he raised himself to a sitting posture, then regained his two-footed equilibrium and stared at me as if in a trance.

"That mangled canvas there is not your work, Cyrus, but a cheap picture that I purchased some days ago to use as a demonstration of what might happen to you, were I a bondwoman to black Vengeance."



“And I stabbed you, girly!” with a renewed horror in his dark eyes.

“My corset, sweet, not me. I am not hurt, believe me.”

“Silence, dear, I love you!”

“Cyrus, love!” and into each other’s arms they fell, laughing, kissing and weeping by turn, whilst I fled the room in utter disgust, entered my bachelor den and began to pack my belongings, determined to leave these simpletons to fight for their own salvation and return to New York and to my neglected practice.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### IN REBUTTAL.

The three greatest evils in this fair country, disrupting society and marring the advance of civilization and science, are Race-track gambling, Whiskey and Divorce, factors that have become so preponderant in the spread of their evil that even the Press throughout the country has taken heed of it and is adding its voice to that of the Clergy in a vain endeavor to stifle it.

Marriage and its principles as carried out in this twentieth century is not wrong in its form; its precepts, propagated by all denominations, creeds, and civil judges, are built upon a concrete structure shown to be solvent both in theory and in practice for the last two thousand years. What then is the basic cause of the wild spread of the divorce evil?

Simply this: The utter laxity of the Law.

Mrs. Scencio secured her decree of absolute divorce on no palpable grounds, no tangible



cause. Incompatibility of temperament is not irrefragable evidence on which a court should put asunder the ties of matrimony. Perjured infidelity in the case of the younger Cassaway made that gentleman amenable to the severest punishment of the sovereign State of New York.

Again we see the weakness of the Divorce Law in that it is not national in its scope. Each State has its own laws governing the granting of divorce, with the exception of South Carolina, which grants none even for infidelity. A man can go to the State of Florida, obtain a divorce on certain grounds, marry again, return to New York and be arrested, as happened to a prominent New Yorker some three years ago, who enjoyed the Mormonatic distinction of having two legal wives in as many States.

Whiskey has gathered more sons and daughters for the kingdom of Old Nick than almost any other evil. Though of late certain States have taken severe measures in regulating its dispensation, as is the case with Georgia, Alabama and Oklahoma, they having gone completely dry.

The hundred-odd brothel shops in the city of New Orleans do more damage in six months than all the saloons do in greater New York. The combined whiskey emporiums of Philadelphia,



Baltimore and Boston produce but one criminal out of every ten thousand men as to Buffalo with its one criminal out of every one thousand, and New Orleans five out of every one hundred.

Of the evils of the race-track gambling one need but take a glance at the dailies to see the fruits of this eyesore. State institutions are filled with the wrecks of lost manhood and womanhood; asylums for children swarm with hordes of orphans, brought to beggary by the insane craze of gambling. The curb in Wall street is a gambling hell, the Stock Exchanges are gambling dens just as much as Pool Rooms, Lottery and Policy shops. Our laws are most profusely lax in certain respects. Let its conscience stretch itself a little, pounce upon these favored gambling institutions and abrogate this evil, warping the senses of our young men throughout every city and hamlet. Let corporate graft feel the stranglehold of the Law; let Franchise stealers rest their avaricious bones in Sing-Sing's gloomy retreat; let Predatory Wealth pay its just toll in taxes the same as the common people, provided, of course, that the administrators of Justice do not wish the coming generations to revert back to barbaric savagery and ignorance.

Primordial man had his law—a stone ax or a club. Must civilization retrograde to those medi-



eval times and resort to a bludgeon in order to bring about an even Justice? Must brute force rise above the temple of Science and Knowledge, and with bloodshed turn the face of the Law toward EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL?

Learned judges, if they should chance to read the above, will damn it as "popular passion, socialism or anarchism"; and, as one small voice can do but little in its own defense, and, whereas the Press to-day is the strongest mouthpiece of the country's citizens, I hereby affix one of the New York Journal's remarkable editorials bearing the caption "With Hats Off, Most Politely, Let Us Address the Supreme Court," an editorial that ought to be cast in bronze and hung in both chambers of our National Capitol, mailed gratis to every servant of the people, whether Senator, Congressman, Governor, Mayor, etc., etc., with the name of the editor who composed this most erudite exhortation affixed thereto as a reminder that brains, thought and foresight are yet extant despite the abominable spread of Machiavel-  
lan commercialism in the pulpits, rostrums, and in the halls of our National and State capitols.

"It is announced that the Justices of the United States Supreme Court, having taken counsel together, have decided to jump into the tor-



rent of 'present day tendencies,' as the honorable Horatius jumped into the raging Tiber.

"The people will want to know what the gentlemen mean by 'present day tendencies.'

"By the way of detail, it is stated that the Supreme Court Judges purpose to stand 'between the Constitution and popular passion.'

"What do the gentlemen mean by 'popular passion'?

"Everything that a man feels strongly is a passion. It was the popular passionate demand for independent government that gave us the Declaration of Independence, and subsequently the Constitution of which these judges talk.

"It was passionate hatred of class government that compelled the framers of the Constitution against their will, to put into that Constitution the bill of rights, liberty of the press, of free speech, of free assembly, the right of habeas corpus, etc.

"Nobody wants mob rule. Nobody wants the fleeting idea of the moment, the hatred aroused by some individual act of injustice, or some individual national misfortune, to overthrow stable, reliable ideas of government.

"But, on the other hand, Supreme Court or no Supreme Court, the People purpose to Govern this country.



“Back in the sixties there were some Supreme Court Judges who felt for a very little while that it was their duty to prevent ‘the mob, popular passion,’ from doing away with human slavery.

“That Supreme Court put on record the Dred Scott decision. But it didn’t take the same court long to find out that when the people really want something they are going to have it. And that same Supreme Court that stood between ‘popular passion’ and slavery, protecting the latter, was before long busy making constitutional provisions for a government in which body slavery thereafter should be unknown.

“The Supreme Court now specifies among its various virtues its determination to curb the passion of the people so far as workingmen are concerned.

“Very good, indeed, if any workingman or his representative is trying to act in opposition to the will of the majority of the people.

“But if the demands of the workingmen represent the well-considered will of the majority of the people, the Supreme Court of the United States is only making itself ridiculous, and repeating the Dred Scott decision, when it tries to prevent the people from having their own way, for they will have it in spite of the most learned and estimable gentlemen that ever wore silk.



“The trouble with some of our highminded public men, put upon the bench and in executive office by the people, is that they mistake the will of the people for the will of the ‘mob.’ You cannot indict a whole nation, and even the honorable and admirable Justices of the Supreme Court can not rule but to interpret the Constitution according to the will of the people. Their decisions are not infallible. But the people’s will is infallible.

“When the question of an income tax came up before the Supreme Court a majority of that body decided that rich men should pay their share to the Government’s support.

“And then one of the honorable body turned a back somersault and decided the other way. And therefore the people to this day are forbidden to tax the incomes of the rich, whose protection is one of the chief functions of government.

“The man who enjoys an annual income of thirty millions, cannot, according to your decision, be taxed one cent to pay for the national protection he receives.

“And that decision we owe to the back somersault turned by a learned Supreme Court Justice in his silk gown.

“Don’t you know, learned gentlemen, that ultimately, popular passion or no popular passion, mob



or no mob, the people of this country are going to compel the rich people to pay their share of taxes, and don't you know that they will induce the Supreme Court, whether it wants to or not, to turn that somersault over again in the other direction?

"Some of the finest minds in this country are on the Supreme Court bench of the United States. These minds, however, make mistakes, as others do. And their judgment may be undermined by power and over-confidence, as has happened before.

"This newspaper knows less about law and the Constitution than the Justices of the Supreme Court. On the other hand, it knows a hundred times as much of the will of the people as all of those Justices put together, since it deals daily and intimately with millions of citizens.

"We can tell the Supreme Court what it may wish to know, that its recent decisions on labor are thoroughly detested, and they misrepresent the will of the people.

"When the Supreme Court of the United States for any reason, with any plausible display of sophistry, forbids the people to protect themselves from mistreatment by Interstate Corporations, that Supreme Court inevitably prepares for itself a re-



versal from the still Higher Court which it occasionally seems to forget.

“One decision tells the people of the United States that workingmen have no right to blacklist any corporation. And the Supreme Court of the United States follows that up by the statement that any corporation has a right to blacklist any union workingman.

“We beg to inform the Supreme Court that those decisions are not going to stand side by side. They won’t stand, because the people don’t approve of them.

“It is not desirable that to save money the great railroad companies should use dangerous machinery, evade the law as to safety appliances, and butcher their employees.

“The Supreme Court has said that Congress has no power to pass a law holding employers absolutely responsible under the ‘Liability’ law.

“But the Supreme Court is mistaken. The people have that power, and they will exercise it, court or no court.

“It is cheerful to know that in these days of earnest thinking, and for some human beings no work and little eating, the Supreme Court is doing its share of the hard thinking. But we believe that we represent the people of the United States when we tell the Supreme Court respect.



fully that what the people want just now is a court that will stand between a workingman and his safety of life and limb, not a court that will stand between the body of the people and their right to control corporations, but a Supreme Court that will stand between the rights of the people and the grasping dishonesty of corporations that too often have their say in Supreme Court and other judicial decisions.

"The people want to be protected, not merely lectured by their Judges."

This country is in dire need of a few more fearless men like Congressman Hearst, Mayor Tom L. Johnson of Cleveland, Ohio; Senator La Follette, and Governors Glenn and Folk, men immune to the jingling music of Gold; men whose souls are irrevocably beyond the contaminating influence of the Mighty Dollar.

When the voting masses of this country (the mollycoddles, if you please), realize that the sacred Ballot is the strongest weapon extant in a Republican form of Government, the evils now existent will be abrogated.

Men like William Randolph Hearst and Senator La Follette, the garbled newspaper accounts to the contrary notwithstanding, have done and, for that matter, are doing to-day, more for collective humanity than is given them credit.



Spiders in the Web of Modern Buccaneers and Captain Kidds of High Finance; plunderers of Common utilities and Franchise stealers force the nomination and election of their miserable puppets (the McClellans and Wittpens), place them in office through the application of a soluble potion concocted by a Mongrel Pirate and administered by a sworn hyperaspist in the shape and form of a green or yellow piece of paper, known to us as legal tender, and fleece anew the treasuries belonging to the people.

This Government of the people should be governed by one of the people belonging to the people for the people. Instead it is governed by bloodthirsty leeches for a favored few—savages who suck the blood from the vitals of the common classes and foist upon them their tried and tested henchmen as Senators, Governors, Mayors, etc., etc.

In the bankrupt town across the North River—Jersey City—a feeble spider holds the fort of the City Hall. A millionaire sybarite is appointed City Collector, there is talk of his poor son being installed as his assistant, and, if he has any more available timber for sinecure positions amongst his brood, and the present administration cannot place them, I hope that “Bob” Davis will so inform me and I will see to it that



my publishers give them a position, for times are unduly hard and money scarce. What a disgrace in this age of enlightenment!

Here's a town whose chief executive, in less than thirty days, is the most execrated and reviled man in the city of his birth.

At Valley Forge, Yorktown and Bunker Hill, our sainted forefathers fought bloody battles for "Equal Taxation or No Representation." In Boston the Tea Party showed its strenuous disapproval of the "Stamp Act" by boarding the vessels and destroying the tea; in Virginia the slogan cry was "Give Us Liberty or Give Us Death!" The frozen, half-starved, barefooted and tattered veterans who crossed the icy Delaware planted the Stars and Stripes over this country and, we were free, free to all intents and purposes until after the sixties, when from the haunts of Satan there sprang a clique of scoundrels who, since, have so augmented their rapacious brood by acts of lawlessness and avariciousness that to-day we are no better off than the serfs of Russia.

Politics is as necessary an adjunct to modern civilization as is religion or science. Brute-force and bloodshed though will spring from the bowels of Anarchism and drive our children back to the stages of barbarism and savagery if the Plu-



tocratic Octopus', now standing before the Public in the guise of Champions and Exponents of Democracy and Republicanism, are not driven from the temple of Politics.

The days of Dictatorship are reposing in the shades of Limbo. The man sent to the White House is the servant of the people, not its lord and master, and has no moral right to appoint his successor by Machiavellian espousals nor to throttle the delegates to a convention like Satan's stranglehold upon the soul of a drunkard.

Police Inspectors, Judges, Mayors, etc., sell their conscience and their soul for filthy lucre, moral lepers these who ride the waves of Corruption and spread the disease like the roll of cholera in India. The Administration of Justice has come to be a mockery and a farce. Devils in the guise of lofty men sell their honor, name and soul, foist themselves upon a long-suffering public, and with the help of our sacred Constitution twisted, distorted and convulsed until it has lost all its former resemblance, pounce upon the public like scavengers upon a mount of offal.

To quote the ninth verse of a poem entitled "Justice," probably the most fearless, brutal and unflinching arraignment of an outraged, mocked and reviled administration of the application of the Law to the Buccaneers of High Finance and



Franchise stealers that has been written in many a day:

“No Future Times shall muffle Justice’s sway,  
Co-equal rich and poor must be I say,  
If Retrogradation shall not rule and sway  
The coming multitudes of another day:  
Let Justice wield its sword and sound its voice;  
Be deaf, O pray, and boast no pamper’d choice;  
Frown at the rich man’s ringing coins of noise  
And, then shall Justice deal Co-equal sway.”

Co-equal Justice! When? A thousand years hence? After rapine lust and murder has seamed the face of Civilization and dragged our posterity back to the stone-ax and the tomahawk. Is this country to be robbed of “co-equal application of the Law for the rich and poor during our tenure of mundane existence and that of our beloved children”? Are we destined to die fighting in the trenches of “Equal Rights For All,” have our bones shoveled out of sight and lie in the shade of blind Oblivion for several generations to come ere the voter, with the hammer of his sacred Ballot, knocks the flagitious scoundrels from their offices and install in their place men of probity, of virtue and of honor?

We have no kings and queens in this country—God save us from such an evil! yet a mongrel aristocracy sits supreme in the favor of the Law, its bags of jingling Gold making music to the ears of Judges, Legislatures and their ilk, purchasing Immunity at so much per transgression,



and fleecing the poor by every known design. Unscrupulous renegades of High Finance corner this country's food supply, raise the prices to a prohibitive mark, squeeze several millions from the poor and, with the blood-money ringing in their ears, hie themselves to Continental Europe and wallow in the filth of luxury, sybarites brutal as a Mongolian savage.

Lewdness is borne by pampered wealth and not by the poor. Idleness feasts upon the spread of secret concupiscence, denied the middle-classes and the very poor because they have not the necessary wherewithal to foster these proclivities of pert Society. These frazzled dames and matrons of an aristocracy, high-bred, cultured and refined in all the arts that spring from the lap of confluent gayety, and from the font of sybaritic incests gleaned from semi-diurnal hobnobbing with European snobs, draw the blinds of their homes, enter a retreat—an illicit maternity hospital this—and when well enough to leave, sell their bastard offspring to some institution, baby farm or asylum, return to their tinseled haunts and insert a notice in the papers that Miss so and so has just returned from London or Paris and is at home to friends from 3 to 5 P. M.

At Washington, D. C., on C Street, S. E., I have seen the grand dames of Society enter a



certain establishment; and, had I waited until my Madam of Opulence left the doctor's retreat I should have remained in front of the house a statue; for these social visits are so long that if a man did not wish to starve during his espionage he would have to establish a restaurant on the sidewalk for the next four or five weeks.

Poor people cannot resort to such expedients; and, when Folly finds a girl out, she bears her offspring in silence and in shame.

The wife of Cyrus Scencio entered such an establishment, relieved herself of a burdensome load, turned it over to the nurse with an emolument of \$500 paid by her aged benefactor, went to Rome and married a Count from nowhere.

Wilburt Cassaway, Jr.'s second marriage was annulled by a most obliging law, took charge of his father's great metropolitan paper, and is a respected member of "Smart Society."

Cyrus received \$30,000 for his Venus from an art dealer, who immediately disposed of same for \$65,000. He is not married because the woman in the case cannot secure a second divorce from her second husband, a Pittsburgh millionaire iron manufacturer, facts that the lady did not divulge until she and Cyrus accidentally came in contact with the man at a hotel where both were registered, the couple denounced and ejected.



They are now in Paris where the reports have it that my friend is on the road to Fame triumphant and immortal.

Truth drove me to the compilation of the foregoing; monumental vices and crimes forced me into an investigation of modern sociological conditions belonging to the unravelling by the Police Department, the Grand Juries and our respected Judges, all of whom are too busy with their respective political conundrums to devote their energies to such common and prevalent conditions in this twentieth century's civilization.

When Fortune frowned I left my metropolitan home, became a panhandler of graveyard insurance, an inmate of a County jail, and honorary member of the hobo fraternity; and, as the tale of this problem novel is ended, I affix thereto the word "Finis" and chain myself anew to the somewhat disagreeable task of an exposure of certain conditions prevalent in certain cities as I found them in my "When Fortune Frowned."

FINIS.







## Announcements.

### BETELGUESE.

#### A Trip Through Hell and the Giant Suns Vega and Perseus.

By

Jean Louis de Esque.

"It left me stunned and bewildered with its panorama of the Infinite," wrote a man of letters who read it in Ms. form. It is, too, the longest lyric poem written in America in a number of years. Its theme is grand and sublime, its hypotyposis frightful and unnerving in more ways than one. And, to give an adequate description of its gigantic scope it is necessary to quote several passages, for words of an ad writer would fall short of doing justice to both the author and the poem. Beginning with a murder scene it takes the reader through the Infernal Regions known as "Betelguese," where

. . . . . jargling javels hythe before a toad  
And mutter swift, a curse that stirs the air;  
And prowling spectres that the cauldrons wrought  
Stare at the storm-swept sins that tell  
Of visioned monsters that the night-winds rode  
When bloody plumes of Horror stole to a secret lair  
Beyond the confines of a leprous ghaut.

A Thaumaturgist peering on the damn'd,  
Raps hideous skulls from which a venom pours,  
And shakes his fists at domes where opals burn,  
From whence the figgum that his hands control  
Is charged with life; and, witches on the sand  
Who sate their thirst in abhorrent gores,  
Flit Fancy's wings to hazards where a crimson urn—  
Within whose hallowed tomb there writhes a soul—  
And with wrastling Courage that the Dawn hath bred,  
In flowing rivers black, to whispers of the night,  
As Torture's stool is dyed a scarlet red.



Feasts with Doom upon the shambling shape,  
That fires bright, toss upon their hissing bed,  
And flees to realms where moonlit shadows light:  
Whilst Thought, in horror that the dawn-winds shed,  
Wings itself in blankets dark as crape,  
And feasts upon the afterglow of trust,  
On cauldrons tossed, where crafty dewes of Death  
Froth devils' pomp and burnished guidons bright  
Unto a brilliant height, where falt'ring eyes,  
Betrayed by crystals that now smoulder in the dust,  
Gasps at the conjured sight with startled breath  
As vapours green, war with the sombre light,  
Unstable as the sunset's golden dyes.

The scented poisons that the geysers spit  
To grottoed apes, where Sin in splendor reigns;  
And cavern'd shapes that dusky shadows hide  
Behind fungus-tapers, whither snarling Doom  
Glares at the tomb of Set, where devils sit,  
Make unsypher'd signs to the weird flames,  
Flit spastic breath to regions far and wide  
And shroud each shrunken soul with gloom.

When carcants glow like scarlet foam,  
And hiss of pyres froth at the moonless night  
In cesspools vext as blood-shot jazles stare  
From shatter'd tombs of kings in dust,  
A pillared light that cleft a splinter'd dome,  
Peers at the strobic gloom and murderous sight  
Of charnel shard as vipers bold blare  
Wrathfully at each gyving Monarch's bust.  
And doleful dirges rake the livid gloom,  
A whisper'd sin sobs at the hell-thrown wrecks;  
Graven monsters clasp papyrus old  
And read therefrom each Body's deeds of shame.  
All cancer'd ghouls on battered keels and decks  
Where warring Cyclops fought as the vellum told  
In cyphers bright, to the whispers of the sullen flame,  
Make hideous visages at the ugly night.  
And terrors that King Tartarus bred  
Assail each separate kingdom treblefold.  
A gangrel clan that some vile Emperor flayed,  
Skirr thro' the dungeoned halls in flight  
And seek the sequester'd caverns of the dead.  
There, where tapers gleam like virgin gold,  
The tombs of kings and queens in jewels are arrayed;



There, too, bivouacs a witch who lifts her cowl  
 And scans the shambling hordes to curse,  
 And with the shatter'd light that cyclones split  
 She juggles forth the secrets of her lust  
 And hurls her measured voice at Hecate's owl,  
 Past portals dark, where harlots nurse  
 Their skinless limbs that Torture bit,  
 And stamps her feet into the burning dust  
 As, into a scyphus bright and terrible she pours a tear;  
 And, musing at the siffling winds of gloom,  
 She wrinkles face and lifts her bony hands  
 And mutters words into the confined night  
 Whereon a silent ghoul hath writ the sign of Fear,  
 And changes dusky gloom to purple bloom,  
 The dusty shoals to opal-sanded strands  
 That reach, past battlewrecks, to crystal light,  
 Where mossy vales with poppies bloom,  
 And hastes her flight from Misery's urn,  
 To onyx seas where agate torches glow,  
 And feasts her eyes upon the deep-set woes of Hell,  
 Upon the pillared foam-dreams of King Doom,  
 Where gyte monsters in red cauldrons burn  
 With moaning airs that rasp each bone-strewn dell;  
 Whilst siffling winds from putrid cajons pour  
 Their music to the strains of weird, belching minions,  
 That sound the advance guard of reigning Fear unstrung,  
 Of droning vipers in this seething pool unhung,  
 All lending their wuther to this infernal night,  
 Where Blackness struck Queen Fairy Light to the core,  
 And Sorcerers wring Despair from their rustling pinions,  
 That from my soul this dire woe hath wrung,  
 Unto the knowledge of monumental tears unsung.

What are we to think of the mind of a man but 27  
 years of age who can portray such vivid scenes as here  
 described? From a murder scene to Typhon's haunts  
 (The Infernal Regions), the giant suns Vega and Per-  
 seus, then back again! Truly a gigantic theme for a  
 really born poet.

For the reader's help there is added a prefatory and  
 a glossary.

12 mo., Cloth.

Price \$1.25.

Connoisseur's Press,

Jersey City.



## DE ODDILO.

*The Seed.*

**An Historical Novel.**

By

Sylvester Cole.

A publisher who read the book in Ms. form claimed it to be the **GRÉATEST SEMI-RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL-HISTORICAL ROMANCE AND TRAGEDY** since Kingsley's "Hypatia." The action of the novel takes place in Paris during the reign of Francis I., 1521, terminating with the declaration of war by Charles V. of Spain.

The hero, De Oddilo, is a nobleman reared by a family of peasants in the kingdom of Navarre. How he ascertains his true identity, the outcome of his mad infatuation for his Father's murderer's daughter, the gruesome manner in which he and his loyal friends extract a written confession from the usurper and murderer (Charles Bertrand la Verux), are graphically and minutely portrayed. To read this story is to be swayed by treble emotions: to laugh, to weep, and to think. It is a literary masterpiece of fiction and history blended into most delightful reading.

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Jersey City.



# THE WEB.

A Novel.

By

E. S. White.

The title of this romance is appropriate indeed, for the meshes in which the actors find themselves is spun with almost invisible threads.

Washington, D. C., is noted for its imposing structures of granite and white marble, and its confusing avenues named after the states; and, upon the latter hangs the opening threads of the liveliest episodes that land an American son of affluence into a sea of unexpected adventures. It fairly bristles with miraculous escapes from death and defeat, strange coincidences and aristocratic knavery. Its scope is large, well laid, and calculated with the precision of clock-work. The attempted elopement of the American hero with the real Princess, the wild ride over a tortuous mountain road, the dead woman in the carriage instead of the bride-to-be, are finely portrayed. Love finally triumphs, and in a most ingenious manner; how, the reader must ascertain.

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## LA VERUX.

*The Harvest.*

By

Sylvester Cole.

Sequel to "De Oddilo" and "Don Vascaeno."

Opening seven years after the advent of "De Oddilo" into La Verux's life, this novel sweeps from chapter to chapter with a rapid succession of events. The Judgment scene where the murderer reveals the one redeeming feature of his villainous character is one not easily forgotten. And the tragedy enacted before the King and his assembled guests where the murder of Thersut Esmond Mantresat, father of De Oddilo, is vividly portrayed by Piet Jariac and Salvez Dejebut, the loyal champions of the hero; and the awe-inspiring spectacle before the Louvre at midnight and the St. Louis Cemetery, are sublime. The dungeon scene at Vincennes, the fearful battle waged by La Verux against the incessant assaults of an implacable Conscience, and the pathetic scenes between his insane daughter Jenista, her old lover, and Cleolo Reynour, wring the heart with complex emotions. There is not a single dull page in the entire novel; no yawning whilst following the unfolding of this tale. If you enjoy historical novels, then read "La Verux" and be assured that you will appreciate its contents from cover to cover.

12 mo., Cloth.

Price \$1.50.

Connoisseur's Press,

Jersey City.



# DON VASCAENO.

*The Fruit.*

**An Historical Novel.**

By

Sylvester Cole.

**Sequel to "De Oddilo."**

In this novel the chief characters of "De Oddilo" are continued, with several new actors added. Just prior to the siege of Marseilles Don Vascaeno, a Spanish warrior and boyhood friend of De Oddilo's father visits Paris to acquaint the latter of his noble lineage, and of the murderous character of that arch-villain Charles Bertrand La Verux, learns through the insane daughter of the murderer that the son of his dead chum lies buried in the cemetery, visits the supposed grave, then hurries to the front of his King's advancing army, where implacable Fate decrees that he capture a midnight spy who proves to be the object of his long search. The events following then in rapid rotation teem with excitement and swift action. And the scene enacted after the Battle of Pavia (1526), where poisons, intrigue and hired assassins strive for the life of De Oddilo, where Jenista, granted a priceless dowry if she succeed in her heart's desire, lays siege to the heart of her one-time lover, are soul-stirring to the extreme. It is a story that you will relish with avidity from beginning to end.

12 mo., Cloth.

Price \$1.50.

Connoisseur's Press,

Jersey City.



# THE FLIGHT OF A SOUL.

By

Jean Louis de Esque.

Not since Milton's "Paradise Lost and Regained" has such a long, portentous work made its appearance. Its action leaps from this mundane sphere through the great Void, thence to the Infernal Regions, where "Gyte monsters spill their bloody tears into a poisoned olpe." For sustained imagination and masterly ingenuity of versification, this poem has no modern competitor. For symmetry of expression, rhythm and plot, it equals Bryant's "Thanatopsis," or Poe's "Raven." It is a stupendous portraiture of the vast Unknown, of the Stygian battlements of rock-ribbed Hell, the Empyrean kingdoms beyond Life's mortal wake, and the spangled realms of Paradise, from whence a secret force spilled him from its bowered vale, and "Bound him to the Chariot of Remorse with stronger chains than those that held Prometheus to the summit of Mount Caucasus." Returning to earth he meets Satan, with whom he plays a game of dice to settle a long standing dispute, the stake being his own soul—and loses.

The condition in which this poem was written as stated in the author's preface is almost past belief. Scientists will marvel at it, laymen will shake their heads in doubt, overcome at the colossal, kaleidoscopic spectacle as here described.

12 mo., Cloth, 225 Pages.

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